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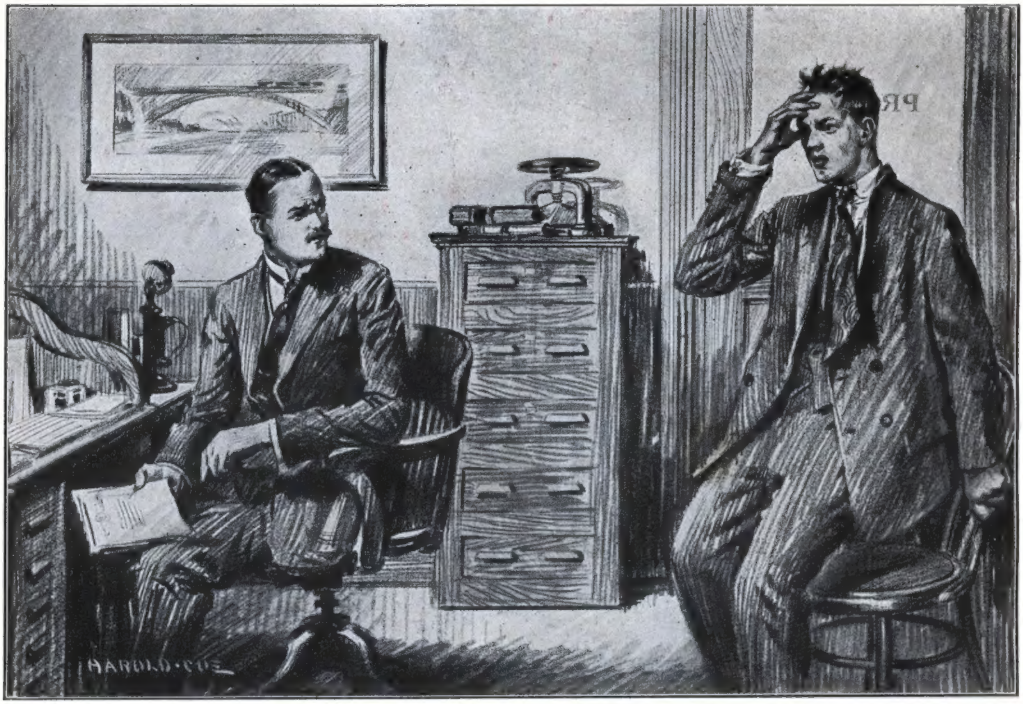


"They got it all!" he managed to say, and sank into a chair

And Now Their Cashier Carries a Colt

SATURDAY A.M. Pay day! At eleven o'clock precisely, methodical John Morse, cashier for Keith & Company, took the small, black bag in which he carried his payroll and hurried over to the Merchants' National Bank.

"One hundred and fifty tens, one hundred and fifty fives, one hundred twos and fifty ones this time, please."

"There you are, Jack," said the teller as he placed the various piles of greenbacks under the wicket, "twenty-five hundred dollars."

John Morse dropped the package into the black bag as he had done on a hundred Saturday mornings before and left the bank.

Five minutes later, breathless, speechless, pale and disheveled, he burst into Mr. Keith's office *minus the bag.*

"They got it all!" he managed to say, and sank into a chair. "I did my best to save it, but they got it all!"

"Only last night when I read about that Everett robbery," said Mr. Keith, glumly, I was thinking 'it might happen to us.' It might happen to anyone—*once.* But we'll take no chances again. Here, John, run over to Stevens' right now and get the best Colt revolver they carry. Hereafter you and the payroll will come back together—safe."

The newspapers are full of stories of payroll robberies. It happens every day—everywhere. Yet you need not fear. You can go and come in safety protected by a trusty Colt.

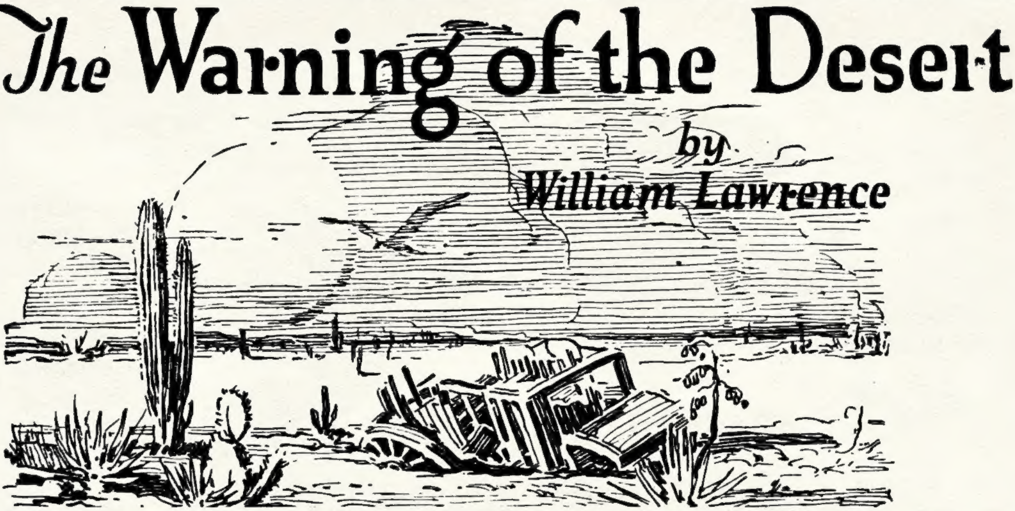
A Colt revolver may save your money and your life. A small investment for a great protection.

Your dealer will gladly show you various models of Colt's revolvers and automatic pistols.

If you write to the Colt's Patent Fire Arms Mfg. Co., Hartford, Connecticut, they will send you free "The Romance of a Colt," an interesting book, giving the historical details of the "World's Right Arm."

The Warning of the Desert

by William Lawrence



THIS is the story of Bill Andrews—plain Bill Andrews. He was twenty-six years old—married—the father of as fine a baby boy as you have ever seen.

But Bill was just like thousands of other men. He had been forced to leave school and go to work when he was still young.

He had taken the first thing that came along and he had worked as hard as he knew how. But somehow or other, he didn't seem to be getting anywhere.

It was hard—terribly hard, sometimes—to make both ends meet. Sickness came—doctor's bills—the rent was raised—and all that sort of thing.

Above everything else in the world, Bill wanted to go home some night and tell his wife of a raise in salary—of a promotion that would mean a happier, better home.

I wonder if there is a man anywhere who hasn't had that same ambition, that same hope!

But that increase in salary and that promotion never came. Indeed, once or twice Bill came mighty near losing his job.

And then, one night, Bill came across an advertisement that told how men just like himself had gotten out of the rut and had gone ahead—how men with no more education than himself had studied at home in their spare time—how the International Correspondence Schools would come to him and help him to develop his natural ability.

Bill had seen that advertisement and that familiar coupon many, many times before. For two years he had been promising himself that he would cut it out and send it to Scranton. He knew that he ought to do it—that he should at least find out what the I. C. S. could do for him. But he never had.

And he might not have sent in the coupon this time, either, but for the few words under a picture called "The Warning of The Desert":

> **"On the Plains of Hesitation bleach the bones of countless millions who, at the Dawn of Victory, sat down to wait—and waiting, died."**

Bill read that over two or three times. "The Plains of Hesitation!" "The Dawn of Victory!" These two phrases kept ringing in his ears. They worked their way into his very soul.

So he clipped that coupon, marked it and mailed it to Scranton. The literature that he wanted came by return mail.

Bill told me the other day that he was surprised how interested he became in his lessons—of the personal interest the teachers at the I. C. S. took in him—how his employers learned about his studying and saw evidence of it in his work.

"The most important moment in my life," says Bill, "was that moment four years ago when I sent in that I. C. S. coupon. And the happiest moment of my life was when I went home with the news of my first real increase in salary and my first real promotion. If I hadn't sent in that coupon I'd still be working at a humdrum job and a small salary."

HOW much longer are you going to wait before taking the step that is bound to bring you more money?

The way is easy. Without cost, without obligation, mark and mail this coupon. It takes only a two-cent stamp and a moment of your time, but it's the most important thing you can do today.

— — — — — — — — TEAR OUT HERE — — — — — — — —

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Without cost or obligation, please explain how I can qualify for the position, or in the subject *before* which I have marked an **X**:

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☐ MINE FOREMAN or ENG'R
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☐ Marine Engineer
☐ ARCHITECT
☐ Contractor and Builder
☐ Architectural Draftsman
☐ Concrete Builder
☐ Structural Engineer
☐ PLUMBING & HEATING
☐ Sheet Metal Worker
☐ Textile Overseer or Supt.
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☐ Pharmacy
☐ BUSINESS MANAGEM'T
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☐ ILLUSTRATING
☐ Cartooning
☐ Private Secretary
☐ Business Correspondent
☐ BOOKKEEPER
☐ Stenographer & Typist
☐ Certified Public Accountant
☐ TRAFFIC MANAGER
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City.............................State..................

Occupation..

Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada.

ADVENTURE
July 10th, 1922

Published three times a month by The Ridgway Company at Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York City. Yearly subscription $6.00 in advance; single copy 25 cents. Entered as second-class matter Oct. 1, 1910, at the post-office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.

Volume 35
Number 4

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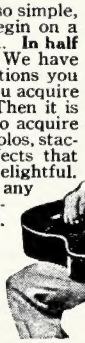

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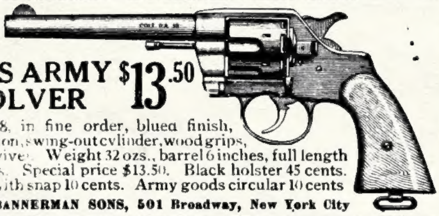

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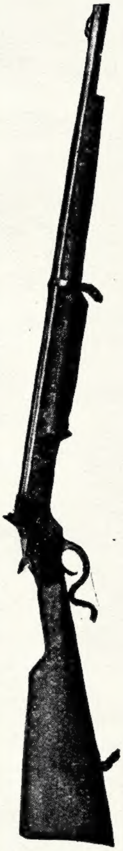
Stevens "Visible Loading" repeating rifle (price $15) has the same accuracy found in model 414, pictured below

The gun behind the man

An amusing incident in the history of American marksmanship



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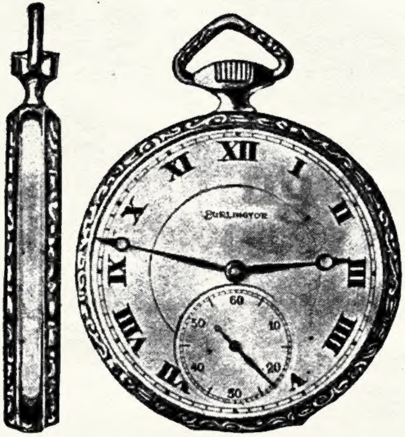
21 Jewel Burlington



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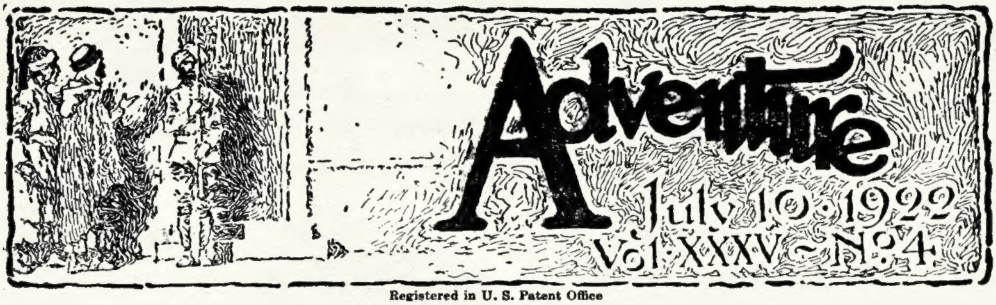

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FOUR North Americans and their Peruvian outlaw friend invade the jungle of the upper Amazon. Before them lies the path of the sinister river, Tigre Yacu, where head-hunters and other terrors live—a menace to the quest of gold. "TIGER RIVER," a four-part serial by Arthur O. Friel, will start in the next issue.

AFTER the death of Cromwell and the accession of a Stuart to the English throne, *David Adoniram* fled with his bride to Virginia. And there—that he might preserve his honor—he forged a mighty sword. "THE THRUST," a complete novelette by B. J. Stolper, in the next issue.

A ROW at a poker party eventuates in an aviation mishap. A tale of *Tex MacDowell*, of the U. S. Army Air Service. "TOO MUCH AIR," a novelette by Thomson Burtis, in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

Don't forget the dates of issue for *Adventure* — the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month

Adventure
July 10 1922
Vol. XXXV
No. 4

THE KING IN CHECK

A COMPLETE NOVEL

by Talbot Mundy

Author of "The Woman Ayisha," "The Lost Trooper," etc.

CHAPTER I

"I'll make one to give this Feisul boy a hoist."

WHOEVER invented chess understood the world's works as some men know clocks and watches. He recognized a fact and based a game on it, with the result that his game endures.

And what he clearly recognized was this: That no king matters much as long as your side is playing a winning game. You can leave your king in his corner then to amuse himself in dignified unimportance. But the minute you begin to lose, your king becomes a source of anxiety.

In what is called real life (which is only a great game, although a mighty good one) it makes no difference what you call your king. Call him Pope if you want to, or President, or Chairman. He grows in importance in proportion as the other side develops the attack. You've got to keep your symbol of authority protected or you lose.

Nevertheless, your game is not lost as long as your king can move. That's why the men who want to hurry up and start a new political era imprison kings and cut their heads off. With no head on his shoulders your king can only move in the direction of the cemetery, which is over the line and doesn't count.

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I love a good fight, and have been told I ought to be ashamed of it. I've noticed, though, that the folk who propose to elevate my morals fight just as hard, and less cleanly, with their tongue than some of us do with our fists and sinews. I'm told, too, quite frequently, that as an American I ought to be ashamed of fighting for a king. Dear old ladies of both sexes have assured me that it isn't moral to give aid and comfort to a gallant gentleman—a godless Mahommedan, too, which makes it much worse—who is striving gamely and without malice to keep his given word and save his country.

But if you've got all you want, do you know of any better fun than lending a hand while some man you happen to like gets his? I don't. Of course, some fellows want too much, and it's bad manners as well as waste of time to inflict your opinion on them. But given a reasonable purpose and a friend who needs your assistance, is there any better sport on earth than risking your own neck to help him put it over?

Walk wide of the man, and particularly of the woman, who makes a noise about lining your pocket or improving your condition. An altruist is my friend James Schuyler Grim, but he makes less noise than a panther on a dark night; and I never knew a man less given to persuading you. He has one purpose but almost never talks about it. It's a sure bet that if we hadn't struck up a close friendship, sounding each other out carefully as opportunity occurred, I would have been in the dark about it until this minute.

All the news of Asia from Alexandretta to the Persian Gulf and from Northern Turkestan to South Arabia reaches Grim's ears sooner or later. He earns his bread and butter knitting all that mess of cross-grained information into one intelligible pattern; after which he interprets it and acts suddenly without advance notices.

Time and again, lone-handed, he has done better than an army corps, by playing chief against chief in a land where the only law is individual interpretation of the Koran.

But it wasn't until our rescue of Jeremy Ross from near Abu Kem, which I told about in the last story, that I ever heard Grim come out openly and admit that he was working to establish Feisul, third son of the King of Mecca, as king of just as many Arabs as might care to have him over them. That was the cat he had been keeping in a bag for seven years.

Right down to the minute when Grim, Jeremy and I sat down with Ben Saoud the Avenger on a stricken field at Abu Kem, and Grim and Jeremy played their hands so cleverly that the Avenger was made unwitting guardian of Jeremy's secret gold mine, and Feisul's open and sworn supporter in the bargain, the heart of Grim's purpose continued to be a mystery even to me; and I have been as intimate with him as any man.

He doles out what he has in mind as grudgingly as any Scot spends the shillings in his purse. But the Scots are generous when they have to be, and so is Grim. There being nothing else for it on that occasion, he spilled the beans, the whole beans, and nothing but the beans. Having admitted us two to his secret, he dilated on it all the way back to Jerusalem, telling us all he knew of Feisul (which would fill a book) and growing almost lyrical at times as he related incidents in proof of his contention that Feisul, lineal descendant of the Prophet Mahommed, is the "whitest" Arab and most gallant leader of his race since Saladin.

Knowing Grim and how carefully suppressed his enthusiasm usually is, I couldn't help being fired by all he said on that occasion.

And as for Jeremy, well—it was like meat and drink to him. You meet men more or less like Jeremy Ross in any of earth's wild places, although you rarely meet his equal for audacity, irreverence and riotous good-fellowship. He isn't the only Australian by a long count who upholds Australia by fist and boast and astounding gallantry, yet stays away from home. You couldn't fix Jeremy with concrete; he'd find some means of bursting any mold.

He had been too long lost in the heart of Arabia for anything except the thought of Sydney Bluffs and the homesteads that lie beyond to tempt him for the first few days.

"You fellers come with me," he insisted. "You chuck the army, Grim, and I'll show you a country where the cows have to bend their backs to let the sun go down. Ha-ha! Show you women, too—red-lipped girls in sunbonnets, that'll look good after the splay-footed crows you see out here. Tell you what: We'll pick up the Orient boat at Port Said—no P & O for me; I'm a passenger aboard ship, not a horrible example!—and make a wake for the Bull's Kid. Murder! Won't the scoff taste good!

"We'll hit the Bull's Kid hard for about a week—mix it with the fellers in from way back—you know—dry-blowers, pearlers, spending it easy—handing their money to Bessie behind the bar and restless because she makes it last too long; watch them a while and get in touch with all that's happening; then flit out of Sydney like bats out of ——, and hump bluey—eh?

"Something'll turn up; it always does. I've got money in the bank—about two thousand here in gold dust with me—and if what you say's true, Grim, about me still being a trooper, then the army owes me three years' back pay, and I'll have it or go to Buckingham Palace and tear off a piece of the king! We're capitalists, by Jupiter! Besides, you fellers agreed that if I shut down the mine at Abu Kem you'd join me and we'd be Grim, Ramsden and Ross."

"I'll keep the bargain if you hold me to it when the time comes," Grim answered.

"You bet I'll hold you to it! Rammy here, and you and I could trade the chosen people off the map between us. We're a combination. What's time got to do with it?"

"We've got to use your mine," Grim answered.

"I'm game. But let's see Australia first."

"Suppose we fix up your discharge, and you go home," Grim suggested. "Come back when you've had a vacation, and by that time Ramsden and I will have done what's possible for Feisul. He's in Damascus now, but the French have got him backed into a corner. No money—not much ammunition—French propaganda undermining the allegiance of his men—time working against him, and nothing to do but wait."

"What in —— have the French got to do with it?"

"They want Syria. They've got the coast towns now. They mean to have Damascus; and if they can catch Feisul and jail him to keep him out of mischief they will."

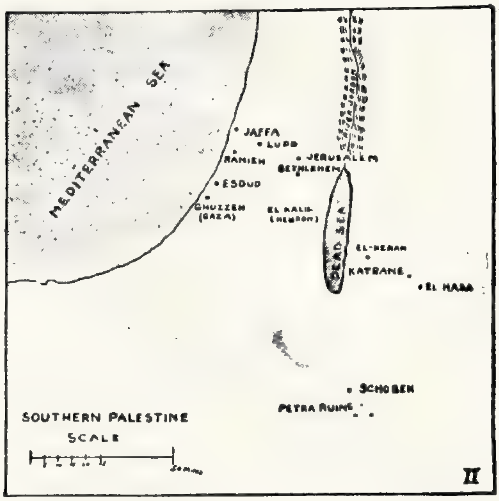
"But —— it! Didn't they promise the Arabs that Feisul should be king of Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia, and all that?"

"They did. The Allies all promised, French included. But since the Armistice the British have made a present of Palestine to the Jews, and the French have demanded Syria for themselves. The British are pro-Feisul, but the French don't want him anywhere except dead or in jail. They know they've given him and the Arabs a raw deal; and they seem to think the simplest way out is to blacken Feisul's character and ditch him. If the French once catch him in Damascus he's done for and the Arab cause is lost."

"Why lost?" demanded Jeremy. "There are plenty more Arabs."

"But only one Feisul. He's the only man who can unite them all."

"I know a chance for him," said Jeremy. "Let him come with us three to Australia. There are thousands of fellers there who fought alongside him and don't care a —— for the French. They'll raise all the —— there is before they'll see him ditched."



"Uh-huh! London's the place for him," Grim answered. "The British like him, and they're ashamed of the way he's been treated. They'll give him Mesopotamia. Baghdad's the old Arab capital, and that'll do for a beginning; after that it's up to the Arabs themselves."

"Well? Where does my gold mine come in?" Jeremy asked.

"Feisul has no money. If it was made clear to him that he could serve the Arabs best by going to London, he'd consider it. The objection would be, though, that he'd have to make terms in advance with hog-financiers, who'd work through the Foreign Office to tie up all the oil and mine and irrigation concessions. If we tell him privately about your gold mine at Abu Kem he can laugh at financiers."

"All right," said Jeremy, "I'll give him the gold mine. Let him erect a modern plant and he'll have millions!"

"Uh-huh! Keep the mine secret. Let him go to London and arrange about Mespot. Just at present High Finance could find a hundred ways of disputing his title to the mine, but once he's king with the Arabs all rooting for him things'll be different. He'll treat you right when that time comes, don't worry."

"Worry? Me?" said Jeremy. "All that worries me is having to see this business through before we can make a wake for Sydney. I'm homesick. But never mind. All right, you fellers, I'll make one to give this Feisul boy a hoist!"

CHAPTER II

"Atcha, Jimgrim sahib! Atcha!"

THAT conversation and Jeremy's conversion to the big idea took place on the way across the desert to Jerusalem—a journey that took us a week on camelback—a rowdy, hot journey with the stifling simoom blowing grit into our followers' throats, who sang and argued alternately nevertheless. For, besides our old Ali Baba and his sixteen sons and grandsons, there were Jeremy's ten pickups from Arabia's by-ways, whom he couldn't leave behind because they knew the secret of his gold mine.

Grim's authority is always at its height on the outbound trail, for then everybody knows that success, and even safety, depends on his swift thinking; on the way home afterward reaction sets in sometimes, because Arabs are made light-headed by success, and it isn't a simple matter to discipline free men when you have no obvious hold over them.

But that was where Jeremy came in. Jeremy could do tricks, and the Arabs were like children when he performed for them. They would be good if he would make one live chicken into two live ones by pulling it apart. They would pitch the tents without fighting if he would swallow a dozen eggs and produce them presently from under a camel's tail. If he would turn on his ventriloquism and make a camel say its prayers, they were willing to forgive—for the moment anyhow—even their nearest enemies.

So we became a sort of traveling sideshow, with Jeremy ballyhooing for himself in an amazing flow of colloquial Arabic, and hardly ever repeating the same trick.

All of which was very good for our crowd and convenient at the moment, but hardly so good for Jeremy's equilibrium. He is one of those handsome, perpetually youthful fellows, whose heads have been a wee mite turned by the sunshine of the world's warm smile. I don't mean by that that he isn't a top-hole man, or a thorough-going friend with guts and gumption, who would chance his neck for any one he likes without a second's hesitation, for he's every bit of that. He has horse-sense, too, and isn't fooled by the sort of flattery that women lavish on men who have laughing eyes and a little dark mustache.

But he hasn't been yet in a predicament that he couldn't laugh or fight his way out of; he has never yet found a job that he cared to stick at for more than a year or two, and seldom one that could hold him for six months.

He jumps from one thing to another, finding all the world so interesting and amusing, and most folk so ready to make friends with him, that he always feels sure of landing softly somewhere over the horizon.

So by the time we reached Jerusalem friend Jeremy was ripe for almost anything except the plan we had agreed on. Having talked that over pretty steadily most of the way from Abu Kem, it seemed already about as stale and unattractive to him as some of his oldest tricks. And Jerusalem provided plenty of distraction. We hadn't been in Grim's quarters half an hour when Jeremy was up to his ears in a dispute that looked like separating us.

Grim, who wears his Arab clothes from preference and never gets into uniform if he can help it, went straight to the telephone to report briefly to headquarters. I took Jeremy up-stairs to discard my Indian disguise and hunt out clothes for Jeremy that would fit him, but found none, I being nearly as heavy as Grim and Jeremy together. He had finished clowning in the kit I offered him, and had got back into his Arab things while I was shaving off the black whiskers with which nature adorns my face whenever I neglect the razor for a few days, when an auto came tooting and roaring down the narrow street, and a moment later three staff officers took the stairs at a run.

So far, good; that was unofficial, good-natured, human and entirely decent. The three of them burst through the bedroom door, all grins, and took turns pumping with Jeremy's right arm—glad to see him—proud to know him—pleased to see him looking fit and well, and all that kind of thing. Even men who had fought all through the war had forgotten some of its red tape by that time, and Jeremy not being in uniform they treated him like a fellow human being. And he reciprocated, Australian fashion, free and easy, throwing up his long legs on my bed and yelling for somebody to bring drinks for the crowd, while they showered questions on him.

It wasn't until Jeremy turned the tables and began to question them that the first cloud showed itself.

"Say, old top," he demanded of a man who wore the crossed swords of a brigadier. "Grim tells me I'm a trooper. When can I get my discharge?"

The effect was instantaneous. You would have thought they had touched a leper by the way they drew themselves up and changed face.

"Never thought of that. Oh I say—this is a complication. You mean——?"

"I mean this," Jeremy answered dryly, because nobody could have helped notice their change of attitude: "I was made prisoner by Arabs and carried off. That's more than three years ago. The war's over. Grim tells me all Australians have been sent home and discharged. What about me?"

"Um-m-m! Ah! This will have to be considered. Let's see; to whom did you surrender?"

"—— you, I didn't surrender! I met Grim in the desert, and reported to him for duty."

"Met Major Grim, eh?"

"Yes," said Grim, appearing in the door. "I came across him in the desert; he reported for duty; I gave him an order, and he obeyed it. Everything's regular."

"Um-m-m! How'd you make that out regular? Have you any proof he wasn't a deserter? He'll have to be charged with desertion and tried by court martial, I'm afraid. Possibly a mere formality, but it'll have to be done, you know, before he can be given a clear discharge. If he can't be proved guilty of desertion he'll be cleared."

"How long will that take?" Jeremy demanded.

His voice rang sharp with the challenge note that means debate has ceased and quarrel started. It isn't the right note for dissolving difficulties.

"Couldn't tell you," said the brigadier. "My advice to you is to keep yourself as inconspicuous as possible until the Administrator gets back."

It was good advice, but Grim, standing behind the brigadier, made signals to Jeremy in vain. Few Australians talk peace when there is no peace, and when there's a fight in prospect they like to get it over with.

"I remember you," said Jeremy, speaking rather slowly, and throwing in a little catchy laugh that was like a war-cry heard through a microphone.

"You were the Fusileer major they lent to the Jordan Highlanders—fine force that—no advance without security—lost two men, if I remember—snake-bite one; the other shot for looting. Am I right? So they've made you a brigadier! Aren't you the staff officer they sent to strafe a regiment of Anzacs for going into action without orders? We chased you to cover! I can see you now running for fear we'd shoot you! Hah!"

Grim took the only course possible in the circumstances. The brigadier's neck was crimson, and Jeremy had to be saved somehow.

"Touch of sun, sir—that and hardship have unhinged him a bit. Suffers from delusions. Suppose I keep him here until the doctor sees him?"

"Um-m-m! Ah! Yes, you'd better. See he gets no whisky, will you. Too bad! Too bad! What a pity!"

Our three visitors left in a hurry, contriving to look devilish important. Grim followed them out.

"Rammy, old cock," said Jeremy, sprawling on the bed again and laughing, "don't look all that serious. Bring back your brigadier and I'll kiss him on both cheeks while you hold him! But say; suppose that doctor's one of these swabs who serve out number nine pills for shell-shock, broken leg, dyspepsia, housemaid's knee and the creeping itch? Suppose he swears I'm luny? What then?"

"Grim will find somebody to swear to anything once," I answered. "But you look altogether too dashed healthy—got to give the doctor-man a chance—here, get between the sheets and kid that something hurts you?"

"Get out! The doc 'ud put a cast-iron splint on it, and order me into a hospital. How about toothache? That do? Do they give you bread and water for it?"

So toothache was selected as an alibi, and Jeremy wrapped his jaw in a towel, after jabbing his cheek with a pin so as to remember on which side the pain should be. But it was artifice wasted, for Grim had turned a better trick. He had found an Australian doctor in the hospital for Sikhs—the only other Australian in Jerusalem just then—and brought him coo-ee-ing up-stairs in a way that proved he knew the whole story already.

THE autopsy, as he called it, was a riot. We didn't talk of anything but fights at Gaza—the surprize at Nazareth, when the German General Staff fled up the road on foot in its pajamas—the three-day scrap at Nebi Samwil, when Australians and Turks took and retook the same hill half-a-dozen times and parched enemies took turns drinking from one flask while the shells of both sides burst above them. It seems to have been almost like old-fashioned war in Palestine from their account of it, either side conceding that the other played the game.

When they had thrashed the whole campaign over from start to finish, making maps on my bed with hair-brushes, razors and things, they got to talking of Australia; and that was all about fighting too: dog-fights, fist-fights between bullockies on the long road from Northern Queensland, riots in Perth when the pearlers came in off the Barrier Reef to spend their pay, rows in the big shearing sheds when the Union men objected to unskilled labor—you'd have thought Australia was one big battle-field, with nothing else but fights worth talking of from dawn till dark.

The doctor was one of those tightly knit, dark-complexioned little men with large freckles and brown eyes, who surprize you with a mixture of intense domestic virtue and a capacity, that shouldn't mix with it at all, for turning up in all the unexpected places. You meet his sort everywhere, and they always have a wife along, who worships them and makes a home out of tin cans and packing cases that would put the stay-at-home housekeepers to shame. They always have a picture on the wall of cows standing knee-deep in the water, and no matter what their circumstances are, there's always something in reserve for guests, offered frankly without apology. Never hesitate with those folk, but don't let them go too far, for they'll beggar themselves to help you in a tight place, if you'll let them. Ticknor his name was. He's a good man.

"Say, Grim: there's a case in the Sikh hospital that ought to interest you," he said at last. "Fellow from Damascus—Arab—one of Feisul's crowd. He wouldn't let them take him to the Zionist hospital—swore a Jew knifed him and that the others would finish the job if they got half a chance. They'd have been arguing yet, and he dead and buried, if I hadn't gone shopping with Mabel. She saw the crowd first (I was in Noureddin's store) and jabbed her way in with her umbrella—she yelled to me and I bucked the line.

"The Jews wanted to tell me I had no right to take that chap to the Sikh hospital, and no more I had; so I plugged him up a bit, and put him in a cab, and let him take himself there, Mabel and me beside him. Seeing I was paying for the cab, I didn't see why Mabel should walk. Of course, once we had him in there he was too sick to be moved; but the army won't pay for him, so I sent a bill to the Zionists, and they returned it with a rude remark on the margin. Maybe I can get the money out of Feisul some day; otherwise I'm stuck."

"I'll settle that," said Grim. "What's the tune he plays?"

"Utter mystery. Swears a Jew stabbed him, but that Damascus outfit blame the Jews for everythnig. He's only just down from Damascus. I think he's one of Feisul's officers, although he's not in uniform—prob'ly on a secret mission. Suppose you go and see him. But say, watch out for the doc on duty—he's a meddler. Tell him nothing!"

"Sure. How about Jeremy? What's the verdict?"

"What do you want done with him?"

"I want him out of reach of trouble here pending his discharge. No need to certify him mad, is there?"

"Mad? All Australians are mad. None of us need a certificate for that. Have you arrested him?"

"Not yet."

"Then you're too late! He's suffering from bad food and exposure. The air of Jerusalem's bad for him, and he's liable to get pugnacious if argued with. That runs in the blood. I order him off duty, and shall recommend him within twenty minutes to the P. M. O. for leave of absence at his own expense. If you know of any General who dares override the P. M. O. I'll show you a brass hat in the wind. Come on; d'you want to bet on it?"

"Will the P. M. O. fall?" asked Grim.

"Like a new chum off a brumby. Signs anything I shove under his nose. Comes round to our house to eat Mabel's damper and sirup three nights a week. You bet he'll sign it. Besides, he's white; pulled out of the firing line by an Australian at Gaza, and hasn't forgotten it. He'd sign anything but checks to help an Anzac. I'll be going.

"You trot up to the slaughter-shop, Grim, and interview that Arab—Sidi bin Something-or-other—forget his name—he lies in number nineteen cot on the left-hand side of the long ward, next to a Pathan who's shy both legs. You can't mistake him. I'll write out a medical certificate for Jeremy and follow. And say; wait a minute! What price the lot of you eating Mabel's chow tonight at our house? We don't keep a cook, so you won't get poisoned. That's settled; I'll tell Mabel you're coming. Too-tle-loo!"

But there was a chance that the brigadier might carry resentment to the point of sending up a Provost-Marshal's guard to arrest Jeremy on the well-known principle that a bird in the hand can be strafed more easily than one with a medical certificate. The bush was the place for our bird until such time as the P. M. O.'s signature should adorn the necessary piece of paper; so we three rode up in a cab together to the Sikh hospital, and had a rare time trying to get in.

You see, there was a Sikh on guard outside, who respected nothing under heaven but his orders. He wouldn't have known Grim in any event, being only recently from India; Grim's uniform would have passed him in, but he and Jeremy were still arrayed as Arabs, and my civilian clothes entitled me in the sentry's opinion to protection lest I commit the heinous sin of impertinence. An Arab in his eyes was as an insect, and a white man, who consorted with such creatures, not a person to be taken seriously.

But our friend Narayan Singh was in the hospital, enjoying the wise veteran's prerogative of resting on full pay after his strenuous adventures along with us at Abu Kem. There was nothing whatever the matter with him. He recognized Grim's voice and emerged through the front door with a milk-white smile flashing in the midst of newly curled black hair—dignified, immense, and full of instant understanding.

Grim said a few words to Narayan Singh in Arabic, which so far as the sentry was concerned wasn't a language but Narayan Singh spoke in turn in Punjabi, and the man just out from India began to droop like Jonah's gourd under the old soldier's scorn.

In consequence we got a full salute with arms presented, and walked in without having to trouble anybody in authority, Narayan Singh leading with the air of an old-time butler showing royalty to their rooms. He even ascertained in an aside that the doctor of the day was busy operating, and broke that good news with consummate tact:

"The *sahibs'* lightest wish is law, but if they should wish to speak with the doctor *sahib*, it would be necessary to call him forth from the surgery, where he works behind locked doors. Is it desired that I should summon him?"

"Operation serious?" asked Grim, and neither man smiled. It was perfect acting.

"Very, *sahib.* He removes the half of a *sepoy's* liver."

"Uh! Couldn't think of interrupting him. Too bad! Lead the way."

But we didn't enter the ward until Narayan Singh and an orderly had placed two screens around number nineteen cot, in the way they do when a man is dying, and had placed three chairs at the bedside contrary to the regulations printed on the wall. Then Narayan Singh stood on guard outside the screens, but didn't miss much of the conversation, I believe.

The man in bed was wounded badly but not fatally, and though his eyes blazed with fever he seemed to have some of his wits about him. He recognized Grim after staring hard at him for about a minute.

"Jimgrim!"

"Sidi bin Tagim, isn't it? Well, well! I thought it might be you," said Grim, speaking the Northern dialect of Arabic, which differs quite a bit from that spoken around Jerusalem.

"Who are these?" asked the man in bed, speaking hoarsely as he stared first at Jeremy and then at me.

"Jmil Ras, a friend of mine," Grim answered.

"And that one?"

He didn't like the look of me at all. Western clothes and a shaven face spell nothing reassuring to the Arab when in trouble; he has been "helped" by the foreigner a time or two too often.

"An American named Ramsden. Also a friend of mine."

"Oh! An *Amirikani?* A *hakim?"* *

"No. Not a man to fear. He is a friend of Feisul."

"On whose word?"

"Mine," Grim answered.

Sidi bin Tagim nodded. He seemed willing to take Grim's word for anything.

"Why did you say a Jew stabbed you?" Grim asked suddenly.

"So that they might hang a Jew or two. *Wallah!* Are the Jews not at the bottom of all trouble? If a Greek should kill a Maltese it would be a Jew who planned it! May the curse of Allah change their faces and the fire of Eblis consume them!"

"Did you see the man who stabbed you?"

"Yes."

"And was he a Jew?"

"Jimgrim, you know better than to ask that! A Jew always hires another to do the killing. He who struck me was a hireling, who shall die by my hand, as Allah is my witness. But may Allah do more to me and bring me down into the dust unburied unless I make ten Jews pay for this!"

"Any one Jew in particular?" Grim asked, and the man in bed closed up like a clam that has been touched.

He was a strange-looking fellow—rather like one of those lean Spaniards whom Goya used to paint, with a scant beard turning gray and hollow cheeks. He had thrown off the gray army blanket because fever burned him, and his lean, hard muscles stood out as if cast in bronze.

"But for the Jews, Feisul would be king of all this land this minute!" he said suddenly, and closed up tight again.

Grim smiled. He nearly always does smile when apparently at a loose end. At moments when most cross-examiners would browbeat he grows sympathetic—humors his man, and by following whatever detour offers, gets back on the trail again.

"How about the French?" he asked.

"May Allah smite them! They are all in the pay of Jews!"

"Can you prove it?"

"*Wallah!* That I can!"

Grim looked incredulous. Those baffling eyes of his twinkled with quiet amusement, and the man in bed resented it.

"You laugh, Jimgrim, but if you would listen I might tell you something."

But Grim only smiled more broadly than ever.

"Sidi bin Tagim, you're one of those fanatics who think the world is all leagued against you. Why should the Jews think you sufficiently important to be murdered?"

"*Wallah!* There are few who hold the reins of happenings as I do!"

"If they'd killed you they'd have stopped the clock, eh?"

"That is as Allah may determine. I am not dead."

"Have you friends in Jerusalem?"

"Surely."

"Strange that they haven't been to see you."

"*Wallah!* Not strange at all!"

"I see. They regard you as a man without authority, who might make trouble and leave other men to face it, eh?"

"Who says I have no authority?"

"Well, if you could prove you have——"

"What then?" the man in bed demanded, trying to sit up.

"Feisul, for instance, is a friend of mine, and these men with me are his friends too. You have no letter, of course, for that would be dangerous——"

"Jimgrim, in the name of the Most High, I swear I had a letter! He who stabbed me took it. I——"

"Was the letter from Feisul?"

"*Malaish.** It was sealed, and bore a number for the signature. If you can get that letter for me, Jimgrim—but what is the use! You are a servant of the British."

"Tell me who stabbed you and I'll get you the letter."

"No, for you are clever. You would learn too much. Better tell the doctor of this place to hurry up and heal me; then I will attend to my own affairs."

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*Doctor.

*No matter.

"I'd like to keep you out of jail, if that's possible," Grim answered. "You and I are old acquaintances, Sidi bin Tagim. But of course, if you're here to sow sedition, and should there be a document at large in proof of it, which document should fall into the hands of the police—well, I couldn't do much for you then. You'd better tell me who stabbed you, and I'll get after him."

"Ah! But if you get the letter?"

"I shall read it, of course."

"But to whom will you show it?"

"Perhaps to my friends here."

"Are they bound by your honor?"

"I shall hold them so."

There was the glint in Grim's eye now that should warn any one who knew him that the scent was hot; added to the fact that the rest of his expression suggested waning interest, that look of his forebode fine hunting.

"There's one other I might consult," he admitted casually. "On my way here I saw one of Feisul's staff captains driving in a cab toward the Jaffa Gate."

The instant effect of that remark was to throw the wounded man into a paroxysm of mingled rage and fear. He almost threw a fit. His already bloodless face grew ashy gray and livid blue alternately, and he would have screamed at Grim if the cough that began to rack his whole body would have let him. As it was, he gasped out unintelligible words and sought to make Grim understand by signs. And Grim apparently did understand.

"Very well," he laughed, "tell me who stabbed you and I won't mention your name to Staff-Captain Abd el Kadir."

"And these men? Will they say nothing?"

"Not a word. Who stabbed you?"

"Yussuf Dakmar! May Allah cut him off from love and mercy!"

"Golly!" exploded Jeremy, forgetting not to talk English. "There's a swine for you! Yussuf Dakmar's the son of a sea-cook who used to sell sheep to the army four times over—drive 'em into camp and get a receipt—drive 'em out again next night—bring 'em back in the morning—get a receipt again—drive 'em off—bring 'em back—us chaps too busy shifting brother Turk to cotton on. He'll be the boy I kicked out of camp once. Maybe remembers it, too. I'll bet his backbone's twanging yet! Lead me to him, Grim old cock, I'd like another piece of him!"

But Grim was humming to himself, playing piano on the bed-sheet with his fingers.

"Is that man not an Arab?" asked the fellow in bed, taking alarm all over again.

"Arab your aunt!" laughed Jeremy. "I eat Arabs! I'm the only original genuine woolly bad man from way back! I'm the plumber who pulled the plug out of Arabia! You know English? Good! You know what a dose of salts is then? You've seen it work? Experienced it, maybe? Hah! You'll understand me. I'm a grain of the Epsom Salt that went through Beersheba, time the Turks had all the booze in sight and we were thirsty. Muddy booze it was too—oozy booze—not fit for washing hogs! Ever heard of Anzacs? Well, I'm one of 'em. Now you know what the scorpion who stung you's up against! You lie there and think about it, cocky; I'll show you his shirt tomorrow morning."

"Suppose we go now," suggested Grim. "I've got the drift of this thing. Get the rest elsewhere."

"You can fan that Joskins for a lot more yet," Jeremy objected. "The plug's pulled. He'll flow if you let him."

Grim nodded.

"Sure he would. Don't want too much from him. Don't want to have to arrest him. Get me?"

"Come on then," answered Jeremy, "I've promised him a shirt!"

Beyond the screen Narayan Singh stood like a statue, deaf, dumb, immovable. Even his eyes were fixed with a blank stare on the wall opposite.

"How much did you hear?" Grim asked him.

"I, *sahib?* I am a sick man. I have been asleep."

"Dream anything?"

"As your honor pleases!"

"Hospital's stuffy, isn't it. Think you could recover health more rapidly outdoors? Sick-leave continued of course, but—how about a little exercise?"

The Sikh's eyes twinkled.

"*Sahib*, you know I need exercise!"

"I'll speak to the doctor for you. In case he signs a new certificate, report to me tonight."

"*Atcha*, Jimgrim *sahib! Atcha!*"

CHAPTER III

"Hum dekta hai."

LIKE most of the quarters occupied by British officers, the house occupied by Major Roger Ticknor and his wife Mabel were "enemy property," and its only virtue consisted in its being rent free. Grim, Jeremy, little Ticknor and his smaller wife, and I sat facing across a small deal table with a stuttering oil lamp between us. In a house not far away some Orthodox Jews, arrayed in purple and green and orange, with fox-fur around the edges of their hats, were drunk and celebrating noisily the Feast of Esther; so you can work out the exact date if you're curious enough. The time was nine P.M.

We had talked the Anzac hurricane-drive through Palestine all over again from the beginning, taking world-known names in vain and doing honor to others that will stay unsung for lack of recognition, when one of those unaccountable pauses came, and for the sake of breaking silence, Mabel Ticknor asked a question. She was a little, plucky, pale-faced thing whom you called instinctively by her first name at the end of half an hour—a sort of little mother of loose-ended men, who can make silk purses out of sows' ears, and wouldn't know how to brag if she were tempted.

"Say, Jim," she asked, turning her head quickly like a bird toward Grim on my left, "what's your verdict about that man from Syria that Roger took in a cab to the Sikh hospital? I'm out a new pair of riding breeches if Roger has to pay the bill for him. I want my money's worth. Tell me his story."

"Go ahead and buy the breeches, Mabel. I'll settle that bill," he answered.

"No you won't, Jim! You're always squandering money. Half your pay goes to the scallywags you've landed in jail. This one's up to Roger and me; we found him."

Grim laughed.

"I can charge his keep under the head of 'information paid for.' I shall sign the voucher without a qualm."

"You'd get blood out of a stone, Jim! Go on, tell us!"

"I'm hired to keep secrets as well as discover them," Grim answered, smiling broadly.

"Of course you are," she retorted. "But I know all Roger's secrets, and he's a doctor, mind you! Am I right, Roger? Come along! There are no servants—no eavesdroppers. Wait: I'll put tea on the table, and then we'll all listen."

She made tea Australian fashion in a billy, which is quick and simple, but causes alleged dyspepsia cures to sell well all the way from Adelaide to the Gulf of Carpentaria.

"You'll have to tell her, Jim," said Jeremy.

"Mabel's safe as an iron roof," put in her husband. "Noisy in the rain, but doesn't leak."

But neither man nor woman could have extracted a story from James Schuyler Grim unless it suited him to tell it. Mabel Ticknor is one of those honest little women who carry men's secrets with them up and down the world. Being confided in by nearly every man who met her was a habit. But Grim tells only when the telling may accomplish something, and I wondered, as he laid his elbow on the table to begin, just what use he meant to make of Mabel Ticknor. He uses what he knows as other level-headed men use coin, spending thriftily for fair advantage.

"This is secret," he began, as soon as Mabel had dumped the contents of the billy into a huge brown teapot. "I expect Narayan Singh here presently. He'll have a letter with him, taken from the Syrian who stabbed that man in the hospital."

"Whoa, hoss!" Jeremy interrupted. "You mean you've sent that Sikh to get the shirt of Yussuf Dakwah?"

Grim nodded.

"That was my job," Jeremy objected.

"Whoa, hoss, yourself, Jeremy!" Grim answered. "You'd have gone down into the Suk* like a bull into a china-shop. Narayan Singh knows where to find him. If he shows fight, he'll be simply handed over to the Sikh patrol for attacking a man in uniform, and by the time he reaches the lock-up that letter will be here on the table between us."

"All the same, that's a lark you've done me out of," Jeremy insisted. "That Yussuf Dakwah's a stinker. I know all about him. Two whole squadrons had to eat lousy biscuit for a week because that swab sold the same meat five times over. But I'll get him yet!"

"Well: as I was saying," Grim resumed,

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*Bazaar.

"there's a letter in Jerusalem that's supposed to be from Feisul. But when Feisul writes anything he signs his name to it, whereas a number is the signature on this. Now that fellow Sidi bin Tagim in the hospital is an honest old kite in his way. He's a great rooter for Feisul. And the only easy way to ditch a man like Feisul, who's as honest as the day is long, and no man's fool, is to convince his fanatical admirers that for his own sake he ought to be forced along a certain course. The game's as old as Adam. You fill up a man like Sidi bin Tagim with tales about Jews—convince him that Jews stand between Feisul and a kingdom—and he'll lend a hand in any scheme ostensibly directed against Jews. Get me?"

"So would I!" swore Jeremy. "I'm against 'em too! I camped alongside the Jordan Highlanders one time when——"

But we had had that story twice that evening with variations. He was balancing his chair on two legs, so I pushed him over backward, and before he could pick himself up again Grim resumed.

"Feisul is in Damascus, and the Syrian Convention has proclaimed him king. That don't suit the French, who detest him. The feeling's mutual. When Feisul went to Paris for the Peace Conference, the French imagined he was easy. They thought, here's another of these Eastern princes who can be taken in the old trap. So they staged a special performance at the Opera for him, and invited him to supper afterward behind the scenes with the usual sort of ladies in full war-paint in attendance."

"Shall we cut that too?" suggested Mabel.

"Sure. Feisul did! He's not that kind of moth. Ever since then the French have declared he's a hypocrite; and because he won't yield his rights they've been busy inventing wrongs of their own and insisting on immediate adjustment. The French haven't left one stone unturned that could irritate Feisul into making a false move."

"To —— with them!" suggested Jeremy, reaching for more tea.

"But Feisul's not easy to irritate," Grim went on. "He's one of those rare men, who get born once in an epoch, who force you to believe that virtue isn't extinct. He's almost like a child in some things—like a good woman in others—and a man of iron courage all the time, who can fire Arabs in the same way Saladin did five centuries ago."

"He looks like a saint," said Jeremy. "I've seen him."

"But he's no soft liver," continued Grim. "He was brought up in the desert among Bedouins, and has their stoical endurance with a sort of religious patience added. Gets that maybe from being a descendant of the Prophet."

"Awful sort to have to fight, that kind are," said Jeremy. "They wear you down!"

"So the French decided some time ago to persuade Feisul's intimates to make a bad break which he couldn't repudiate."

"Why don't he cut loose with forty or fifty thousand men and boot the French into the sea?" demanded Jeremy. "I'll make one to help him! I knew a Frenchman once, who——"

"We'll come to that presently," said Grim. "I dare say you didn't hear of Verdun."

"Objection sustained. Hand it to 'em. They've got guts," grinned Jeremy. "Fire away, old top."

"Well, they ran foul of an awkward predicament, which is that there are some darned decent fellows among the officers of their army of occupation. There's more than a scattering of decent gentlemen who don't like dirt. I won't say they tell Feisul secrets, or disobey orders; but if you want to give a man a square deal there are ways of doing it without sending him telegrams."

Mabel put the tea back on the kerosene stove to stew, with an extra handful of black leaves in it. Grim continued:

"Another thing: The French are half-afraid that if they take the field against Feisul on some trumped-up pretext, he'll get assistance from the British. They could send him things he needs more than money, and can't get. Ninety-nine per cent. of the British are pro-Feisul. Some of them would risk their jobs to help him in a pinch. The French have got to stall those men before they can attack Feisul safely."

"How d'you mean, stall 'em?" demanded Jeremy. "Not all the British are fools—only their statesmen, and generals, and sixty per cent. of the junior officers and rank and file. The rest don't have to be fed pap from a bottle; they're good men. Takes more than talk to stall that kind off a man they like."

"You've got the idea, Jeremy. You have to show them. Well: why not stir up revolution here in Palestine in Feisul's name? Why not get the malcontents to murder Jews wholesale, with propaganda blowing full blast to make it look as if Feisul's hand is directing it all? It's as simple as falling off a log. French agents who look like honest Arabs approach the most harebrained zealots who happen to be on the inside with Feisul, and suggest to them that the French and British are Allies; therefore the only way to keep the British from helping the French will be to start red-hot trouble in Palestine that will keep the British busy protecting themselves and the Jews.

"The secret agents point out that although Feisul is against anything of the sort, he must be committed to it for his own sake. And they make great capital out of Feisul's promise that he will protect the Jews if recognized as king of independent Syria. 'Kill all the Jews beforehand, so there won't be any for him to protect when the time comes!' that's the argument."

Mabel interrupted.

"Haven't you warned Feisul?"

She had both elbows on the table and her chin between her hands, and I dare say she had listened in just that attitude to fifty inside stories that the newspapers would scatter gold in vain to get.

"I sure did. And he has sent one of his staff down here to keep an eye on things. I saw him this afternoon riding in a cab toward the Jaffa Gate. I said as much to that fellow in the hospital, and he was scared stiff at the idea of my recovering the supposed Feisul letter and showing it to an officer who is really in Feisul's confidence. That—I mean the man's fear—linked everything up."

"You talk like Sherlock Holmes," laughed Jeremy. "I'll bet you a new hat nothing comes of it."

"That bet's on," Grim answered. "It's to be a female hat, and Mabel gets it. Order an expensive one from Paris, Mabel; Jeremy shall pay. We've lots of other information. The troops here have been warned of an intended massacre of Jews. The arrival of this letter probably puts a date to it.

"But it puts a date to something else on which the whole future of the Near East hangs; and that means the future of half the world, and maybe the whole of it, because about three hundred million Mohammedans are watching Feisul and will govern themselves accordingly. India, Persia, Mesopotamia, Egypt, all Northern Africa—there's almost no limit to what depends on Feisul's safety; and the French can't or won't understand that."

There came the sound of heavy ammunition boots outside on the stone step, followed by a cough that I believe I could recognize among a thousand. Narayan Singh coughs either of two ways—once, deep bass, for all's well; twice, almost falsetto, for a hint of danger. This time it was the single deep bass cough. But it was followed after half a minute by the two high-pitched barks, and Grim held up a hand for silence. At the end of perhaps a minute there came from the veranda a perfect imitation of the lascar's ungrammatical, whining sing-song from a fo'castle-head—

"*Hum dekta hai!*" *

Grim nodded—to himself, I suppose, for none had spoken to him.

"Do you mind stepping out and getting that letter from him, Ramsden? Keep in the shadow, please, and give him this pistol; he may need it."

So I slipped out through the screen door and spent a minute looking for Narayan Singh. I'm an old hunter, but it wasn't until Narayan Sigh deliberately moved a hand to call attention to himself that I discovered him within ten feet of me.

The risk of being seen from the street in case some spy were lurking out there was obvious. So I walked all the way round the house, and came and stood below him on his left hand where the house cast impenetrable shadow; but though I took my time and moved stealthily he heard me, and passed me a letter through the veranda rails, accepting the pistol in exchange without comment.

I could see him distinctly from that angle. His uniform on one side was torn almost into rags, and his turban was all awry, as if he had lost it in a scuffle and hadn't spared time to rewind it properly—a sure sign of desperate haste; for a male tiger in the Spring-time is no more careful of his whiskers than a Sikh is of the thirty yards of cloth he winds around his head.

As he didn't speak or make any more movement than was necessary to pass me the letter and take the pistol, I returned the way I had come, entered by the back door, tossed the letter to Grim, and crept back again to bear a hand in case of need. Grim said nothing, but Jeremy followed me, and two minutes later the Australian and I were crouching in darkness below the veranda. This time I don't think Narayan Singh was aware of friends at hand.

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* I'm on the watch.

His eyes were fixed on the slightly lighter gap in a dark wall that was the garden gate but looked more like a dim hole leading into a cave. There being no other entrance that we knew of, Jeremy and I doubled up on the same job, and a rat couldn't have come through without one of the three of us detecting him. If we had had our senses with us we might have realized that Narayan Singh was perfectly capable of watching that single narrow space, and have used our own eyes to better advantage. However, we're all three alive today, and two of us learned a lesson.

IT WASN'T long—perhaps five minutes—before a man showed himself outside the gate, like a specter dodging this and that way in response to unearthly impulse. Once or twice he started forward, as if on the point of sneaking in, but thought better of it and retreated. Once his attitude suggested that he might be taking aim with a pistol; but if that was so, he chose not to waste a shot or start an alarm by firing at a mark he couldn't see. What he did accomplish was to keep six keen eyes fixed on him.

And that gave three other men their chance to gain an entrance at the rear of the wall in the garden, and creep up unawares. It was probably sheer accident that led all three of them along the far side of the house, but it was fortunate for Jeremy and me, for otherwise cold steel between our shoulder-blades would likely have been our first intimation of their presence.

We never suspected their existence until they gained the veranda by the end opposite to where we waited; and I think they would have done their murder if the man outside the gate hadn't lost his head from excitement or some similar emotion and tried to make a signal to them. All three had brought up against the end window, where a shade torn in two places provided a good view into the room in which Grim, Mabel and the doctor were still sitting. Each of them had a pistol, and their intention didn't admit of doubt.

"Are you there, *sahib?*" Narayan Singh whispered.

But Jeremy and I were aware of them almost as soon as he, and rather than make a noise by vaulting the veranda rail, we took the longer route by way of the front steps. Jeremy, who was wearing sandals, kicked them off and, not having to creep so carefully, moved faster.

Of course, the obvious question is, why didn't Narayan Singh shoot? I had a pistol too; why didn't I use it? Well, I'll tell you. None but the irresponsible criminal shoots a man except in obedience to orders or in self-defense.

You may argue that those three night-prowlers might have shot Ticknor and his wife and Grim through the window while we aired our superior virtue. The answer to that is, that they didn't, although that was their intention. Narayan Singh, already once that night in danger of his life, and a "godless, heathen Sikh," as I have heard a missionary call him, pocketed the pistol I had given him before proceeding to engage, he being also a white man by the proper way of estimating such things.

Jeremy was first on the scene of action, with Narayan Singh close behind him, and I was quite a bit behind, for I tripped against the top step in my hurry. The noise I made gave the alarm, and the three Arabs twisted round like cornered scorpions. I guess they couldn't see us well at first, having been staring through the torn shade into the lighted room.

Their pistols were cocked, but Jeremy's fist landed in the nearest man's face before he could shoot, and he went crashing backwards into his friend behind, whose head disappeared for a moment through the window-pane, and the only blood shed on that occasion came from the first man's nose and the back of the second man's neck where the smashed glass slit a gash in it.

The third man fired wildly at me, and missed, a fraction of a second before Narayan Singh landed on him with hands and feet; whereat the man in the street emptied his pistol at me and ran away. I was in two minds whether to give chase to him, but made the wrong decision, being heavy on my feet and none too fond of running, so the big fish got away.

But even with my help added, the three less important fish still gave a lot of trouble, for they fought like wild-cats, using teeth and finger-nails, and the doctor and his wife and Grim were all out lending a hand before we had them finally convinced that the game was up. Mabel trussed up the worst man with a clothes line while I sat on him.

I expected to see a crowd around the house by that time, but Jerusalem works otherwise than some cities. The sound of a pistol-shot sends everybody hurrying for cover, lest some enemy accuse them afterwards of having had a hand in the disturbance. And the nearest police post was a mile away. So we had our little outrage all to ourselves, although strange tales went the rounds of the Holy City that night, and two weeks later several European newspapers printed a beautiful account of a midnight massacre of Jews.

We dragged our prisoners into the sitting room, and stood them up in front of Grim after the doctor and Mabel had attended to their hurts, which weren't especially serious, although nobody need expect to get in the way of Jeremy's fist and feel comfortable for several hours afterwards. The cut made in the second man's neck by broken glass needed several stitches, but the third man was only winded from having been sat on, and of course he was much more sorry for himself than either of the other two—a fact that Grim noted.

There was another noticeable circumstance that shed light on human nature and Grim's knowledge of it. They were all three eager to tell their story, although not necessarily the same story; whereas Narayan Singh, who knew that every word he might say would be believed implicitly, was in no hurry to tell his at all.

Now when you're dealing with Eastern and near-Eastern people of the sort who lie instinctively (and it may be that this applies to the West as well) it's a good plan to establish, if you can, a basis of truth for them to build their tale on; because the truth acts like acid on untruth. They're going to lie in any case; but lies told without any reference to truth knit better than when invented at a moment's notice to explain away another's straight-forward statement. There's a plausible theory that culprits taken in the act are best examined in secret, one by one, in ignorance of all the evidence against them.

The wise method is to let them hear the evidence against themselves. Nine times out of ten they will accept that as unanswerable, and strive to twist its meaning or smother it under a mass of lies. But the truth they have accepted, as I have said, works just like acid and destroys their argument almost as fast as they build it up. In the few cases when that doesn't happen, they break down altogether and confess.

Anyhow, Grim, who taught me what I have just written, refused to listen to their bleating until Narayan Singh first told in their hearing all that he knew about the night's events. They were forced to sit down on the floor and listen to him like three coffee-shop loungers being told a story; and I don't doubt that the effect was strengthened by the Sikh's standing facing them, for the contrast was as between jackals and a lion.

Not that they were small men, for they weren't, or mere ten-dollar assassins picked up in the *suk*. They looked well-fed, and wore fine linen, whereas Narayan Singh was in rags and had lost weight in our recent desert marching, so that his cheek-bones stood out and he looked superficially much more like a man at bay than they did.

But their well-cared-for faces were lean in the wrong place, and puffy under the eyes. In place of courage they flaunted an insolent leer, and the smile intended to convey self-confidence betrayed to a close observer anxiety bordering on panic.

The most offensive part about them really was their feet, which are indices of character too often overlooked. They had come to their task in slippers, which they had kicked off before reaching the veranda, and instead of the firm, tough feet that a real man stands on, what they displayed as they squatted were subtle, soft things, not exactly flabby, but even more suggestive of treachery than their thin beaks and shifty eyes.

To sum them up, they were dandies, of the kind who join the Young Turk Party and believe the New Era can be distilled of talk and tricks; and they looked like mean animals compared to that stanch conservative Narayan Singh, who, nevertheless, is not without his own degree of subtlety.

CHAPTER IV

"I call this awful!"

"*SAHIB*, in accordance with instructions I proceeded to Christian Street to the place you spoke of, where I found Yussuf Dakmar drinking coffee and smoking in company with these men and others. They did not see me in the beginning, because I entered by the door of a house three-score and five paces farther down the street; and having by that means gained the roof I descended to a gallery built of stone above one end of the coffee-shop, and there lay concealed among evil-smelling bags.

"They conversed in Arabic; and presently when other men had entered, some of whose names I overheard and wrote down on this slip of paper, Yussuf Dakmar locked the outer door, turning the great key twice and setting a chain in place as well. Then he stood on a red stool having four short legs, with his back to the door that he had locked, and spoke in the manner of one who stirs a multitude, gesticulating greatly.

"The argument he made was thus: He said that Jerusalem is a holy city, and Palestine a holy land; and that promises are all the more sacred if given in connection with religious matters; whereat they all applauded greatly. Nevertheless, a little later on he mocked at all religion, and they applauded that too. He said that the Allies, persuaded thereto by the British, had made a promise to the Emir Feisul on the strength of which the Arabs made common war with the Allies against the Turks and Germans, losing of their own a hundred thousand men and untold money.

"So, *sahib*. Next he asked them how much of that promise made by the Allies to Emir Feisul as the leader of the Arabs had been kept, or was likely to be kept; and they answered in one voice, 'None of it!' Whereat he nodded, as a teacher nods gravely when the pupils have their lesson well by heart, and said presently in a voice like that of a Guru denouncing sin:

" 'A woman's promise is a little matter; who believes it? When it is broken all men laugh. A promise extorted under threat or torture is not binding, since he who made the promise was not free to govern his own conduct; that is law. A promise made in business,' said he, 'is a contract contingent on circumstances and subject to litigation. But a promise made in wartime by a nation is a pledge set down in letters of blood. Whoever breaks it is guilty of blood; and whoever fails to smite dead the breaker of that oath, commits treason against Allah!'

"They applauded that speech greatly, *sahib*, and when they grew silent he bade them look about and judge for themselves at whose door the breaking of that sacred promise really lay. 'Show me,' said he, 'one trace of Arab government in all Palestine! Who own the land?' he asked them. 'Arabs!' said they. 'Yet to whom has the country been given?' he shouted. 'To the Jews!' they answered; and he grew silent for a little while, like a teacher whose class has only given half the answer to a question until presently one man growled out 'To the sword with the Jews in the name of Allah!' and the others echoed that which satisfied him, for he smiled, nevertheless not using those words himself. And presently he continued:

" 'We in this room are men of enlightenment. We are satisfied to leave past and future to the speculations of idle dreamers. For us the present. So we attach no value to the fact that Feisul is descended in a straight line from the founder of the Moslem faith; for that is a supersitition as foolish in its way as Christianity or any other creed. But who is there like Feisul who can unite all Arabs under one banner?'

"They answered, *sahib*, that Feisul is the only living man who can accomplish that, making many assertions in his praise, Yussuf Dakmar nodding approval as each spoke. 'Yet,' said he when they had finished, 'Feisul is also fallible. In certain ways he is a fool, and principally in this: That he insists on keeping his own promises to men who have broken their own promises to him.' And like pupils in a class who recite their lesson, they all murmured that such a course as that is madness.

" 'So,' said he, 'we are clear on that point. We are not altruists, nor religious fanatics, nor slaves, but men of commonsense who have a business in view. We are not Feisul's servants, but he ours. We make use of him, not he of us. If he persists in a wrong course, we must force him into the right one, for the day of autocratic government is past and the hour has come when those who truly represent the people have the first right to direct all policy. If the right is still withheld from them, they must take it. And it is we, in this room who truly represent the Arab cause, on whom lies the responsibility of forcing Feisul's hand!'

"Well, *sahib*, these three prisoners who sit here offered at once to go to Damascus and kill the men who are advising Feisul wrongly. They said that if they were given money they could easily hire Damascenes to do the dagger work, there being, as the *sahib* doubtless knows, a common saying in these parts about Damascus folk and sharp steel. Whereat Yussuf Dagmar suddenly assumed a sneering tone of voice, saying that he preferred men for his part with spunk enough to do such work themselves, and there was an argument, they protesting and he mocking them, until at last this man, whose neck the glass cut, demanded of him whether he, Yussuf Dakmar, was not in truth an empty boaster who would flinch at bloodshed.

"He seemed to have been waiting for just that, *sahib*, for he smirked and threw a chest. 'I am a man,' said he, 'of example as well as precept. I have done what I saw fit to do! I make no boasts,' said he, 'for a man who talks about himself sets others talking, and there are deeds creditable to the doer that are best not spoken of. But I will tell you other things, and you may draw your own conclusions.

" 'Because Feisul refuses to attack the French, having promised those promise-breakers that he will not; and because Feisul has promised to protect the Jews and is likely to try to keep that promise to the promise-breaking English, certain of his intimates in Damascus, in whose confidence I am, have determined to force both issues, taking steps in his name that will commit him finally. Feisul's army of fifty thousand men is as ready as it will ever be. There is no money in the Damascus treasury, and therefore every moment of delay is now a moment lost. The time has come for action!' "

Our three prisoners were listening to the recitation spellbound, and so were we all for that matter. The mere memory feat was amazing enough. Few men could listen in hiding to a stranger's words, and report them exactly after an interval of more than an hour; but Narayan Singh did better than that, for he reproduced the speaker's gesture and inflexion, so that we had a mental picture of the scene that he described.

Mabel offered him stewed tannic acid in the name of tea, and Ticknor suggested a chair, but he waved both offers aside and continued as if the picture before his mind and the words he was remembering might escape him if he took things easy.

"*Sahib*, they were very much excited when he spoke of action. First one man and then another stood up and boasted of having made all things ready; how this one had supervised the hiding of sharp swords; how another had kept men at work collecting cartridges on battle-fields; how this and that one had continued spreading talk against the Jews, so that they swore that at least ten thousand Moslems in Jerusalem are fretting to begin a massacre. 'Let Feisul only strike the first blow from Damascus,' said they, 'and Palestine will run blood instantly!' "

"And we sit here drinking tea," exclaimed Mabel, "while up at headquarters they're dancing and playing bridge! I call this awful! We all ought to be——"

Grim smiled and shook his head for silence.

"We've known all this for some time," he said. "Don't worry. There'll be no massacre; the troops are sleeping by their arms, and every possible contingency has been provided for. Go on, Narayan Singh."

"Well, *sahib;* when they had done babbling and boasting this Yussuf Dakmar got back on his stool and spoke sternly, as one who gives final judgment and intends to be obeyed. 'It is we who must make the first move,' said he; 'and we shall force Feisul to move after us by moving in his name.' Whereat this man here, whose nose was broken on the fist of Jeremy sahib, said that a letter bearing Feisul's seal would make the matter easier. 'For the men,' said he, 'who are to slit Jews' throats will ask first for proof of our authority to bid them begin the business.'

"And at that speech Yussuf Dakmar laughed with great delight. 'Better late than never!' said he. 'Better to think of a wise precaution now than not at all! But oh, ye are an empty-headed crew!' he told them. 'I pity the conspiracy that had no better planning than ye would make for it without my forethought! I thought of this long ago! I sent a message to Damascus, begging that a date be set and just such a letter sent to us. Feisul, I knew, would sign no such letter; but the paper he uses lies on an open desk, and there are men about him who have access to his seal. And because my appeal was well-timed it met with approval. A letter such as I asked for was written on Feisul's paper, sealed with his seal, and sent!'

" 'But does it bear his signature?' a man asked.

"'How could it, since he never saw the letter?' Yussuf Dakmar answered.

"'Then few will pay heed to it,' said the other.

"'Perhaps if we were all such fools as you that might be so,' Yussuf Dakmar retorted. 'However, fortunately the rest of us have readier wits! This letter is signed with a number, and the number is that of Feisul's generation in descent from the Prophet Mahommed. Let men be told that this is his secret signature, and when they see his seal beside it will they not believe? Every hour in Jerusalem, and in all the world, men believe things less credible than that!'

"But at that, *sahib*, another man asked him how they might know that the letter really came from Damascus. 'It well might be,' said that one, 'a forgery contrived by Yussuf Dakmar himself, in which case though they might stir many Moslems into action by showing it, the men in Damascus would fail to follow up the massacre by striking at the French. And if they do not strike at the French,' said he, 'the French will not appeal to the British for aid; and so the British troops will be free to protect the Jews and butcher us, by which means we shall be worse off than before.'

"Whereat Yussuf Dakmar laughed again. 'If ye will go to the Sikh hospital,' said he, 'ye will find there the man who brought the letter. He lies in a cot in the upper story with a knife-wound between his shoulder-blades. It was a mistake—an accident unfortunate for him, the letter was intended for me, but I did not know that. What does the life of one fool matter? He gave out that Jews stabbed him, and it may be he believes that; yet I have the letter in my pocket here!' And he touched with one hand the portion of his coat beneath which was the pocket that contained the letter. I watching, *sahib*, from where I lay hidden.

"He was about, I think, to show them the letter, when another thought occurred to him. He wrinkled his brow, as if seeking words in which to make his meaning clear, and they seemed willing enough to wait for him, but not so I, for I now knew where the letter was. So I sprang into their midst, falling less dangerously than I might have done by reason of a man's shoulders that served for a cushion. It may be that his bones broke under my weight. I can give no accurate report as to that, for I was in great haste. But as he gave way under me I pitched forward, and, kicking Yussuf Dakmar in the belly with my boot, I fell on him, they falling on me in turn and we all writhing together in one mass on the floor. So I secured the letter."

"Good man!" Grim nodded.

"Wish I'd been there!" mourned Jeremy

"And, having what I came for, I broke free; and taking the red stool I hurled it at the lamp, so that we were in total darkness, which made it a simple matter to unlock the door and proceed about my business. Nevertheless, I heard them strike matches behind me, and it seemed unwise to take to my heels at once, it being easy to pursue a man who runs.

"As the *sahib* doubtless remembers, between that coffee-shop and the next house is a stone buttress jutting out into the street, forming on its side farthest from the coffee-shop a dark corner, for whose filth and stink the street cleaners ought to be punished. Therein I lurked, while those who pursued ran past me up the street, I counting them; and among them I did not count Yussuf Dakmar and three more. It happened that a man was running up the street and the pursuers supposed him to be me. So I was left with only four to deal with; and it entered my head that no doubt Jimgrim *sahib* would be pleased to interview Yussuf Dakmar.

"And after a few moments Yussuf Dakmar came forth, and I heard him speak to these three fellows.

"'Those fools,' said he, 'hunt like street dogs at the sound of rubbish tossed out of a window. But I think that Indian soldier is less foolish than they. If I were he,' said Yussuf Dakmar, 'I think I wouldn't run far, with all these shadows to right and left and all the hours from now until dawn in which to act the fox. I suspect he is not far away at this minute. Nevertheless,' said he, 'those Indians are dangerous fellows. It is highly important that we get that letter from him; but it is almost equally important that we stop his mouth, which would be impossible if he should escape alive. If we wait here,' said he, 'we shall see him emerge from a shadow, if I am not much mistaken.'

"So they waited, *sahib*. And after a few minutes, when my breath had returned to me, I let him have credit as a wise one by emerging as he had said. And those four stalked me through the streets, not daring to come close until I should lead them to a lonely place; and I led them with discretion to this house, where happened what the *sahib* knows.

"That is all I know about this matter, except that being absent from duty on sick-leave there may be difficulty in the matter of my tunic, which is badly torn."

Having finished his story Narayan Singh stood at attention like one of those wooden images they used to keep on the sidewalk outside tobacco stores.

Grim smiled at the prisoners and asked whether they had any remarks to make—a totally lawless proceeding, for he did not caution them, and had no jurisdiction as a magistrate. They were three men caught red-handed attempting murder and burglary, and entitled accordingly to protection that the law doesn't always accord to honest men. But, as I have said, a true tale in the ears of criminals acts like a chemical reagent. It sets them to work lying, and the lies burn off, disclosing naked truth again. But, mother of me, they were daring liars. The fellow who had come out of the scrap more or less unscathed piped up for the three, the other two nodding and prompting him in whispers.

"What that Indian says in the main is true. He did jump down from the gallery and surprize a meeting summoned by Yussuf Dakmar. And it is true that Yussuf Dakmar's purpose is to bring about a massacre of Jews, which is to be simultaneous with an attack by Feisul's forces on the French in Syria. But we three men are not in favor of it. We have had no part in the preparations, although we know all details. We are honest men, who have the public interest at heart, and accordingly we have spied on Yussuf Dakmar, purposing to expose all his plans to the authorities."

Jeremy began humming to himself. Mabel tittered, and little Doctor Ticknor swore under his breath. But Grim looked as if he believed them—looked pleasantly surprized—and nodded gravely.

"But that hardly explains your following this Indian through the streets and attacking him on the veranda," he suggested, as if sure they could explain that too—as sure enough they did.

"We did not attack him. He attacked us. It was obvious to us from the first that he must be an agent of the Government. So when Yussuf Dakmar told us to follow and murder him we decided it was time to expose Yussuf Dakmar, and that this was our opportunity. We knew surely that this Indian would take that letter straight to some official of the Government; it was only necessary to pretend to hunt him and in that manner inveigle Yussuf Dakmar into the toils.

"But when we reached this house Yussuf Dakmar was afraid and refused to approach nearer than the street. He insisted on keeping watch outside the garden gate while we should draw near and shoot every one who might be in the house and recover the letter. He is a coward, and we could not persuade him.

"So we decided to pretend to do his bidding, and to whisper through the window to the people within to pass out to the street by some back way and capture him, after which we would give all our evidence to the authorities.

"It was while we were looking through the window, seeking to call the attention of those within for that purpose and no other, that we were attacked and submitted to much unnecessary violence. That is the whole truth, as Allah is our witness! We are honest men, who seek to uphold the law, and we claim the protection of the Government. We are ready to tell all we know, including the names of those connected with this plot."

CHAPTER V

"Nobody will know. No bouquets."

THERE followed a tedious hour or two, during which Grim cross-examined the three "honest men," and took down lists of names from their dictation, getting Doctor Ticknor meanwhile to go for the police because Yussuf Dakmar might still be lurking in the neighborhood for a chance to murder Narayan Singh. It was only after the police had carried off the prisoners to jail (where they repudiated their entire confession next morning) that Grim showed us the letter which, like a spark, had fired a powder magazine—although a smaller one than its writer intended.

"It isn't in Feisul's handwriting," he said, holding the feathery Arab script up to the lamp-light, "and it's no more like his phraseology than a camel resembles a locomotive. Listen to this:

"To the Pan-Arab Committee in Jerusalem, by favor of Yussuf Dakmar Bey its District President, Greeting in the name of God:

"Ye know that on former occasions the foes of our land and race were overwhelmed when, relying on the aid of the Most High, and raising the green banner of the prophet—on whom be peace, we launched our squadrons in a cause held sacred by us all.

"Ye know that in that fashion, and not otherwise, the accursed conquerors were driven forth and our sacred banner was set on high over the Damascus roofs, where by Allah's blessing may it wave forever!

"Ye know how those who claimed to be our friends have since proven themselves foes, so that the independent state for which we fought is held today in ignominious subjection by aliens, who deny the truth Faith and hold their promises as nothing.

"Ye know how Damascus is beset by the French, and Palestine is held by the British who, notwithstanding the oath they swore to us, are daily betraying us Arabs to the Jews.

"Know now, then, that the hour has struck when, again in the name of Allah, we must finish what we formerly began and with our true swords force these infidels to yield our country to us. Nor on this occasion shall we sheathe our swords until from end to end our land is free and united under one government of our own choosing.

"Know that this time there shall be no half-measures nor any compromise. It is written, Ye shall show no quarter to the infidel. Let no Jew live to boast that he has footing in the land of our ancestors. Leave ye no root of them in the earth nor seedling that can spring into a tree! Smite, and smite swiftly in the name of Him who never sleeps, who keeps all promises, whose almighty hand is ready to preserve the Faithful!

"Whereunto ye are bidden to take courage. Whereunto our army of Syria stands ready. Whereunto the day has been appointed.

"Know ye that the tenth day from the sending of this letter, and at dawn, is the appointed time. Therefore let all make common cause for the favor of the Most High which awaits the Faithful.

"In the name of God and Mohammed the Prophet of God, on whom be blessings."

There followed the Moslem date and the numerical signature over Feisul's indubitable seal. Grim figured a moment and worked out the corresponding date according to our western calendar.

"Leaves six days," he said pleasantly. "It means the French intend to attack Damascus seven days from now."

"Let 'em!" Jeremy exploded. "Feisul'll give 'em ——! All they've got are Algerians."

"The French have poison-gas," Grim answered dourly. "Feisul's men have no masks."

"Get 'em some!"

That was Jeremy again. Grim didn't answer, but went on talking:

"They're going to get Damascus. All they've waited for was poison-gas, and now there's no stopping 'em. They forged this letter after the gas arrived. Now if they catch Feisul in Damascus they'll put him on trial for his life, and they probably hope to get this letter back somehow to use as evidence against him."

"Go slow, Jim!" Mabel objected. "Where's your proof that the French are jockeying this? Isn't that Feisul's seal?"

"Yes, and it's his paper. But not his handwriting."

"He might have dictated it, mightn't he?"

"Never in those words. Feisul don't talk or write that way. The letter's a manifest forgery, as I'll prove by confronting Feisul with it. But there's a little oversight that should convince you it's a forgery. Have you a magnifying glass, doc?"

Ticknor produced one in a minute, and Grim held the letter under the lamp. On the rather wide margin, carefully rubbed out, but not so carefully that the indentation did not show, was the French word "*magnifique*" that had been written with a rather heavy hand and one of those hard pencils supplied to colonial governments by exporters from stocks that can't be sold at home.

"That proves nothing," Mabel insisted. "All educated Arabs talk French. Somebody on Feisul's staff was asked for an opinion on the letter before it went. My husband's Arab orderly told me only yesterday that a sling I made for a man in the hospital was '*magnifique.*' "

The objection was well enough taken, because it was the sort the forger of the letter would be likely to raise if brought to book. But Grim's argument was not exhausted.

"There are other points, Mabel. For one thing, it's blue metallic ink. Feisul's private letters are all written with indelible black stuff made from pellets that I gave him; they're imported from the States."

"But if Feisul wanted to prove an alibi, he naturally wouldn't use his special private ink," objected Mabel.

"Then why his seal, and his special private note-paper? However, there's another point.

"Feisul writes the purest kind of Arabic, and this isn't that sort of Arabic. It was written by a foreigner—perhaps a Frenchman—possibly an Armenian—most likely a

Turk—certainly one of the outer ring of politicians who have access to Feisul and seek to control him, but are not really in his confidence. Damascus is simply a network of spies of that kind—men who attached themselves to the Arab cause when it looked like winning and are now busy transferring their allegiance.

"I think I could name the man who wrote this; I think I know the man who wrote that '*magnifique*.' If I'm right, Yussuf Dakmar will notify the French tonight through their agents in Jerusalem. The man who wrote that '*magnifique*' will know before morning that the letter's missing; and it doesn't matter how careful I may be, it'll be known as soon as I start for Damascus.

"They'll dope out that our obvious course would be to confront Feisul with this letter. The only way to travel is by train; the roads are rotten—in fact, no auto could get through; they'd tip off the Bedouins, who'd murder everybody.

"So they'll watch the trains and especially Haifa, where every one going north has to spend the night; and they'll stop at nothing to get the letter back, for two reasons; as long as it's in our hands it can be used to establish proof of the plot against Feisul; once it's back in theirs, they can keep it in their secret dossier to use against Feisul if they ever catch him and bring him to trail. You remember the Dreyfus case?

"I shall start for Damascus by the early train—probably take an auto as far as Ludd. If I want to live until I reach Damascus I shall have to prove conclusively that I haven't that letter with me. Any one known to be in British service is going to be suspected and, if not murdered, robbed. Ramsden has been seen about too much with me. Jeremy might juggle by but he's already notorious, and these people are shrewd. Better hold Jeremy in reserve, and the same with Narayan Singh. A woman's best. How about you, Mabel?"

"What d'you mean, Jim?"

"Do you know a woman in Haifa?"

"Of course I do."

"Well enough to expect a bed for the night at a moment's notice?"

"Certainly."

Mabel's eyes were growing very bright indeed. It was her husband who looked alarmed.

"Well now, here's the point."

Grim leaned back in his chair and lit a cigaret, not looking at anybody, stating his case impersonally, as it were, which is much the shrewdest way of being personal.

"Feisul's up against it, and he's the best man in all this land, bar none. They've dealt to him from a cold deck, and he's bound to lose this hand whichever way he plays it. To put it differently, he's in check, but not checkmated. He'll be checkmated, though, if the French ever lay hands on him, and then good-by to the Arabs' chance for twenty years.

"I propose to save him for another effort, and the only way to do that is to convince him. The best way to convince him is to show him that letter, which can't be done if Feisul's enemies discover who carries it. If Ramsden, Jeremy, Narayan Singh and I start for Damascus, pretending that one or other of us has the letter concealed on his person, and if a woman really carries it, we'll manage. Is Mabel Ticknor going to be the woman? That's the point."

"Too dangerous, Jim! Too dangerous!" Ticknor put in nervously.

"Pardon me, old man. The danger is for us four, who pretend we've got the thing."

"There are lots of other women, and I've only got one wife!" objected Ticknor.

"We're pressed for time," Grim answered. "You see, Ticknor old man, you're a Cornstalk and therefore an outsider—just a medico, who saws bones for a living, satisfied to keep your body out of the poorhouse, your soul out of hell, and your name out of the newspapers. Your wife is presumably more so. There are several officials' wives who would jump at the chance to be useful; but a sudden trip toward Damascus just now would cause any one of them to be suspected, whereas Mabel wouldn't be."

"I don't know why not!" Ticknor retorted. "Wasn't she in here when those three murderers came to finish the lot of us? If Yussuf Dakmar makes any report at all he'll surely say he traced the letter to this house."

"Yussuf Dakmar came no nearer than the street," Grim answered. "He has no notion who is in here. His three friends are in jail under lock and key, where he can't get at them. How long have you had this house? Since yesterday, isn't it? D'you kid yourself that Yussuf Dakmar knows who lives here?"

"I can get leave of absence. Suppose I

go in Mabel's place?" suggested Ticknor, visibly worried.

"The mere fact that she goes, while you stay here, will be presumptive evidence that she isn't on a dangerous mission," Grim answered. "No. It has got to be a woman. If Mabel won't go I'll find some one else."

You could tell by Mabel's eyes and attitude that she was what the salesmen call "sold" already; but you didn't need a magnifying glass to detect that Ticknor wasn't. Men of his wandering habit know too well what a brave, good-tempered wife means to encourage her to take long chances; for although there are lots of women who would like to wander and accept the world's pot luck, there are precious few capable of doing it without doubling a fellow's trouble; when they know how to halve the trouble and double the fun they're priceless.

Grim played his usual game, which is to spank down his ace of trumps face upward on the table. Most of us forget what *are* trumps in a crisis.

"I guess it's up to you, doc," he said, turning toward Ticknor. "There's nothing in it for you. Feisul isn't on the make; I don't believe he cares ten cents who is to be the nominal ruler of the Arabs, provided they get their promised independence. He'd rather retire and live privately. But he only considers himself in so far as he can serve the Arab cause. Now, you've risked Mabel's life a score of times in order to help sick men in mining camps, and malaria victims and Lord knows what else. Here's a chance to do the biggest thing of all——"

"Of course, if you put it that way," said Ticknor, hesitating.

"Just your style, too. Nobody will know. No bouquets. You won't have to stammer a speech at any dinner given in your honor."

"D'you want to do it, Mabel?" asked Ticknor, looking at her keenly across the table.

"Of course I do!"

"All right, girl. Only, hurry back."

He looked hard at Grim again, then into my eyes and then Jeremy's.

"She's in your hands. I don't want to see any of you three chaps alive again unless she comes back safe. Is that clear?"

"Clear and clean!" exploded Jeremy. "It's a bet, doc. Half a mo' you chaps; that's my mine at Abu Kem, isn't it? I've agreed to give the thing to Feisul and make what terms I can with him. Jim and Rammy divvy up with me on my end, if any. That right? I say; let the doc and Mabel have a half-share each of anything our end amounts to."

Well; it took about as long to settle that business as you'd expect. The doctor and Mabel protested, but it's easier to give away a fortune that is still in prospect than a small sum that is really tangible—I mean between folk who stand on their own feet. It doesn't seem to deprive the giver of much, or to strain the pride of the recipient unduly.

I've been given shares in unproven Eldorados times out of number, and could paper the wall of, say, a good-sized bathroom with the stock certificates—may do it some day if I ever settle down. But the only gift of that sort that I ever knew to pay dividends, except to the printer of the gilt-edged scrip, is Jeremy's gold mine; and you'll look in vain for any mention of that in the stock exchange lists. The time to get in on that good thing was that night by Mabel Ticknor's teapot in Jerusalem.

It was nearly midnight before we had everything settled, and there was still a lot to do before we could catch the morning train. One thing that Grim did was to take gum and paper and contrive an envelope that looked in the dark sufficiently like the alleged Feisul letter; and he carried that in his hand as he took to the street, with Narayan Singh following among the shadows within hail. Jeremy and I kept Narayan Singh in sight, for it was possible that Yussuf Dakmar had gathered a gang to waylay whoever might emerge from the house.

But he seemed to have had enough of bungling accomplices that night. Grim hadn't gone fifty paces, keeping well in the middle of the road, when a solitary shadow began stalking him, and doing it so cautiously that though he had to cross the circles of street lamp-light now and then neither Jeremy nor I could have identified him afterward.

Narayan Singh had orders not to do anything but guard Grim against assault, for Grim judged it wise to leave Yussuf Dakmar at large than to precipitate a climax by arresting him. He had the names of most of the local conspirators, and if the leader were seized too soon the equally dangerous rank and file might scatter and escape.

Down inside the Jaffa Gate, in a dark alley beside the Grand Hotel, there are usually two or three cabs standing at any hour of the night ready to care for belated Christian gentlemen who have looked on the wine when it was any color that it chanced to be. There were three there, and Grim took the first one, flourishing his envelope carelessly under the corner lamp.

Yussuf Dakmar took the next in line, and ordered the driver to follow Grim. So we naturally took the last one, all three of us crowding on to the rear seat in order to watch the cabs in front. But as soon as we had driven back outside the city gate Yussuf Dakmar looked behind him and, growing suspicious of us, ordered his driver to let us pass.

It would have been too obvious if we had stopped too, so we hid our faces as we passed, and then put Jeremy on the front seat, he looking like an Arab and being most unrecognizable. Yussuf Dakmar followed us at long range, and as the lean horses toiled slowly up the Mount of Olives to headquarters the interval between the cabs grew greater. By the time we reached the guard-house and answered the Sikh sentry's challenge there was no sign of Grim in front, and we could only hear in the distance behind us the occasional click of a loose shoe to tell that Yussuf Dakmar was still following.

CHAPTER VI

"Better the evil that we know . . ."

YUSSUF DAKMAR had his nerve with him that night, or possibly desperation robbed him of discretion. He may have been a more than usually daring man with his wits about him, but you'd have to hunt down the valley of death before you could bring the psychoanalytic guns to bear on him for what they're worth. I can only tell you what he did, not why he did it.

The great hospice that the German nation built on the crown of the Mount of Olives to glorify their Kaiser stood like a shadow among shadows in its compound, surrounded by a fairly high wall. There was a pretty strong guard under an Indian officer in the guard-house at the arched main gate where the sentry challenged us.

A sentry stood at the foot of the steps under the portico at the main entrance, and there was another armed man on duty patrolling the grounds. But there were one or two other entrances, locked, though quite easy to negotiate, which the sentry could only observe while he marched toward them; for five minutes at a time, while his back was turned, at least two gates leading to official residences offered opportunity to an active man.

One lone light at a window on the top floor suggested that the officer of the night might be awake, but what with the screeching of owls and a wind that sighed among the shrubs headquarters looked and sounded more like a deserted ancient castle than the cranium and brain-cells of Administration.

We heard Yussuf Dakmar stop his cab two hundred yards away. The cabman turned his horses and drove back toward Jerusalem without calling on Allah to witness that his fare should have been twice what he received; he didn't even lash the horses savagely; so we supposed that he hadn't been paid, and went on to deduce from that that Yussuf Dakmar had driven away again, after satisfying himself that the Feisul letter had reached headquarters. It was lazy, bad reasoning—the sort of superficial, smart stuff that has cost the lives of thousands of good men times out of number—four o'clock o' the morning intelligence that, like the courage of that hour, needs priming by the foreman, or the sergeant-major, or the bosun as the case may be.

The sentry turned out the guard, who let us through the gate after a word with Narayan Singh; and the man who leaned on his bayonet under the portico at the end of the drive admitted us without any argument at all.

I suppose he thought that having come that far we must be people in authority. Ever since then I have believed all the stories told me about spies who walked where they chose unchallenged during wartime; for we three—a Sikh enlisted man, an Australian disguised as an Arab, and an American in civilian clothes—entered unannounced and unwatched the building where every secret of the Near East was pigeonholed.

We walked about the corridors and up and downstairs for ten minutes, looking in vain for Grim. Here and there a servant snored on a mat in a corner, and once a big dog came and sniffed at us without making any further comment. Jeremy kicked one man awake, who, mistaking him for an Arab, cursed him in three languages, in the name of three separate gods, and promptly went to sleep again. The sensation was like being turned loose in the strong-room of a national treasury with nobody watching if you should choose to help yourself.

There are acres of floor in that building. We walked twice the whole circuit of the upper and lower corridors, knocking on dozens of doors but getting no answer, and finally brought up in the entrance hall.

Then it occurred to me that Grim might have gone into the building by some private entrance, perhaps around on the eastern side, so we set out to look for one.

We had just reached the northwest angle of the building, when Narayan Singh, who was walking a pace in front, stopped suddenly and held up both hands for silence. Whoever he could see among the shadows must have heard us, but it was no rare thing for officers to come roistering down those front steps and along the drive hours after midnight, and our sudden silence was more likely to give alarm than the noise had been. I began talking again in a normal voice, saying anything at all, peering about into the shadows meanwhile. But it was several seconds before I made out what the Sikh's keener eyes had detected instantly, and Jeremy saw it before I did.

There was a magnolia shrub about ten paces away from us, casting a shadow so deep that the ground it covered looked like a bottomless abyss. But nevertheless, something bright moved in it—perhaps the sheen of that lone light in an upper window reflected on a knife-hilt or a button—something that moved in time to a man's breathing.

If there was a certainty in the world it was that somebody who had no right to be there was lurking in that shadow, and he was presumably up to mischief. On the other hand, I had absolutely no right in that place either. Jeremy and Narayan Singh, being both in the British army, were liable to be disciplined, and I might be requested to leave the country, if we should happen to blunder and tree the wrong 'possum, revenge being more than usually sweet to the official disturbed in the pursuit of unauthorized "diplomacy." It might even be some clandestine love affair.

So I took each of my companions by the arm, gripping Jeremy's particularly tightly, and started forward, whispering an explanation after we had turned the corner of the building.

"Let one of us go and warn the guard," I suggested. "If we should draw that cover and start a shindy, we're more likely to get shot by the guard than thanked."

So Narayan Singh started off for the guard-house, he being the one most capable of explaining matters to the Sikh officer, and Jeremy and I crept back through the shadows to within earshot of the dark magnolia tree, choosing a point from which we could see if anybody bolted.

You know how some uncatalogd sense informs you in the dark of the movement of the man beside you? I looked suddenly sideways toward Jeremy, knowing, although I couldn't see him, that his eyes were seeking mine. It is only the animals who omit in the darkness those instinctive daylight movements; men don't have sufficient control of themselves. We had both heard Grim's voice at the same instant, speaking Arabic but unmistakable.

There were three men there. Grim was talking to the other two.

"Keep your hands on each other's shoulders! Don't move! I'm going to search all your pockets again. Now, Mr. Charkian. Ah! That feels like quite a pretty little weapon; mother o' pearl on the butt? Have you a permit? Never mind; not having the weapon you won't need a permit, will you? And papers—*Mashallah!* what a lot of documents; they must be highly important ones since you hide them under your shirt. I expect you planned to sell them, eh? Too bad, too bad!

"You keep your hands on Mr. Charkian's shoulders, Yussuf Dakmar, or I'll have to use violence! I'm not sure, Mr. Charkian, that it wouldn't be kinder to society to send you to jail after all; you need a bath so badly. It seems a pity that a chief clerk to the Administration shouldn't have a chance to wash himself, doesn't it? Well: I'll have to read these papers afterward—after we've usurped the prerogative of Destiny and mapped out a little of the future. Now—are you both listening? Do you know who I am?"

There was no answer.

"You, Mr. Charkian?"

"I think you are Major Grim."

"Ah! You wish to flatter me, don't you? Never mind; let us pretend I'm Major Grim disguised as an Arab; only, I'm afraid we must continue the conversation in Arabic; I might disillusion you if I tried to talk

English. We'll say then that I'm Major Grim, disguised. Let's see now: What would he do in the circumstances? Here's Yussuf Dakmar, wanted for murder in the city and known to be plotting a massacre, seen climbing a wall when the sentry's back was turned, and caught in conference with Mr. Charkian, confidential clerk to the Administration. I'm sorry I didn't hear all that was said at your conference, for that might have made it easier to guess what Major Grim would do."

"Don't play with us like a cat playing with a mouse!" snarled somebody. "Tell us what you want. If you were Major Grim you'd have handed us over to those officers who passed just now. You're just as much irregular as we are. Hurry up and make your bargain, or the guard may come and arrest us all!"

"Yes, hurry up!" complained the other man. "I don't want to be caught here; and as for those papers you have taken, if we *are* caught I shall say you stole them from the office—you and Yussuf Dakmar, and that I followed you to recover them, and you both attacked me!"

"Very well," said Grim's voice pleasantly. "I'll let you go. I think you're dangerous. You'd better be quick, because I think I hear the guard coming!"

"Give me back the papers then!"

"Aha! Will you wait and discuss them with the guard, or go at once?"

The Armenian clerk didn't answer, but got up and slunk away.

"Why did you let that fool go?" demanded Yussuf Dakmar. "Now he will awaken some officer and start hue and cry with a story that we robbed him. Listen! There comes the guard! We had better both run!"

"Not so fast!" Grim answered.

And then he raised his voice perceptibly, as if he wished to be overheard:

"I think those men who passed just now were not officers at all. Perhaps they were strangers. It may be that one of them is confused, and is leading the guard in the wrong direction!"

"Don't make so much noise then!" retorted Yussuf Dakmar.

Jeremy, who thinks habitually about ten times as fast as I do, slipped away at once into the shadows to find Narayan Singh and decoy the guard elsewhere. I didn't envy him the job, for Sikhs use cold steel first and argue afterward when on the *qui vive* in the dark. However, he accomplished his purpose. Narayan Singh saved his life, and the guard arrested him on general principles. You could hear both Jeremy and Narayan Singh using Grim's name freely. Yussuf Dakmar wasn't deaf. He gave tongue:

"There! Did you hear that? They are speaking of Major Grim. You are a fool if you wait here any longer. That fellow Grim is a devil, I tell you. If he finds us we are both lost!"

"We have to be found first," Grim answered, and you could almost hear him smile.

"Quick then! What do you want?" snapped Yussuf Dakmar.

Grim's answer was the real surprize of the evening. It bewildered me as much as it astonished Yussuf Dakmar.

"I want that letter that came from the Emir Feisul!"

"I haven't got it! I swear I haven't!"

"I know that already, for I searched you. Where is it?"

"Ask Allah! It was stolen by a Sikh, who delivered it to some one in a house near the military hospital, who in turn gave it to an Arab, who brought it here. I hoped that fellow Charkian might steal it back again, but you have spoiled everything. Charkian will turn against me now to save himself. What do you want with the letter?"

"I must have it!" Grim answered. "The French agent——"

"What—Sidi Said? You know him?"

"Surely. He would pay me a thousand pounds for it."

"May Allah change his face! He only offered me five hundred!"

"You have seen him already, then?" Grim asked. "I don't believe you! When did you see him?"

"On the way up here. He stopped my cab to speak to me at the foot of the hill."

I began to see the drift of Grim's purpose. He had established the fact that the French secret agent was already on the track of the letter, and that in turn explained why he had not seized Yussuf Dakmar and put him in jail. It was better to use the man, as the sequel proved. And Yussuf Dakmar walked straight into Grim's trap.

"What is your name?" he demanded.

"Call me Omar," said Grim.

"A Turk, are you? Well, Omar, let us help each other to get that letter, and divide the reward. Sidi Said told me that the British are sure to confront Feisul with it, and to do it secretly if they can. They will try to send it to Damascus. Let us two find out who takes it, and waylay him."

"Why should I divide with you?" demanded Grim, who is much too good an actor to pretend to agree without bargaining.

"Because otherwise you will not succeed. I was afraid of you when you first surprized me with Charkian. But now that I know you for a spy in the pay of the French I am not afraid of you, even though you have my revolver and dagger. You dare not kill me, for I would shout for help and the guard would come. You are in danger as much as I am. So you may either agree to work with me, sharing the reward, or you may work alone and have nothing for your pains; for I shall bring accomplices to help me take the letter from you after you have stolen it!"

Well, I suppose that any one with criminal intentions could submit gracefully to that much blackmail. Besides, Grim was rather pressed for time and couldn't afford to prolong the argument.

"I see you are a determined man," he answered. "Your demand is unreasonable, but I must agree to it."

"Then give me back my pistol!"

"No. I need it. I lent mine this evening to another man, who has not yet returned it. That was a piece of wood with which I held you up just now. You must get yourself another."

"They are hard to come by in Jerusalem. Give me mine back."

"No. I shall keep it to protect myself against you."

"Why? You have no need to fear me if we work together."

"Because I intend to tell you what I know; and I may find it convenient to shoot you if you betray the information."

"Oh! Well, tell away."

"I have been cleverer than you," Grim announced blandly. "I knew who had given the order to the Sikh to steal that letter from you, and I was concealed in his house when the letter was brought to him. I heard the conference that followed, so I know what is going to be done about it."

"Oh! That was very smart. Well; tell me."

"Three men are going to take the letter to Damascus, but I don't know which of them will have it on his person. One is an Arab. One is an American. The third is that same Sikh who took the letter from you. They will take the train from Ludd, and I have engaged myself as servant to the American."

"Now that was extremely clever of you!" said Yussuf Dakmar.

"Yes," Grim agreed. "But perhaps it will be as well to have an accomplice after all, and you will do as well as any. If I steal the letter they may accuse me; but if I can pass it to you, then I can submit to a search and oblige them to apologize."

"True! True! That will be excellent."

"So you had better take the morning train for Damascus," Grim continued. "But understand: If you bring others with you I shall suspect you of intending to play a trick on me. In that event I shall shoot you with your own pistol, and take my chance of escaping afterward. In fact, you are a dead man, Yussuf Dakmar, the minute I suspect you of playing me false."

"The same to you likewise!" Yussuf Dakmar answered fervently.

"Then we understand each other," said Grim. "The best thing you can do between now and train-time is to see the French agent again."

"What good will that do? He is irritable —nervous; he will only ask a thousand questions."

"Then your visit will do all the more good. You can calm him. We don't want a horde of fools interfering with us on the journey. We want to work quietly, and to share the reward between us. Therefore, you should tell him that you are confident of getting the letter if he will only leave the business to you alone. Give him every assurance, and explain to him that interference may mean failure. Now, I have done much the greater part so far; let this be your share to balance the account between us; you go to Sidi Said, the French agent, and make sure that he doesn't hinder us by trying to help."

"Very well, I will do that. And I shall meet you at the station in the morning?"

"No. My party will go as far as Ludd by motor. You will see us join the train there. Go now, while the guard is out of the way."

I could not see, but I heard Yussuf Dakmar get up and go. He had hardly time to get out of earshot when Grim's voice broke the silence again—

"You there, Ramsden?"

Instead of answering I approached.

"Did you hear what was said?" he asked.

"Yes. Why didn't you arrest both the blackguards and have done with it?"

"Better the evil that we know," he answered, with the familiar smile in his voice. "The important thing is to sidetrack the French agent, who could put fifty ruffians on our trail instead of one."

"Why not send a provost-marshal's guard to the French agent, then?"

"Can't do that. France and Great Britain are allies. Besides, they might retaliate by spifflicating our agent in Damascus. Wise folk who live in glass houses don't throw stones. What I think has been accomplished is to reduce our probable risk down to Yussuf Dakmar, who's a mean squib at best; and I think we've drawn suspicion clear away from Mabel Ticknor. All that remains is for me to go to that room where you see the light burning and discuss matters with the chief."

"If he's awake he's lonely!" said I; and I told Grim of our experience inside the building.

"Yes," he said. "Governments are all like that. They talk glibly of the ship of state; but a ship run in the same way would pile up or sink the first night out. You'd better go home and get an hour's sleep; I'll call you at seven."

"We'll take turns sleeping on the train," I answered. "Come first and rescue Jeremy. I think the guard pinched him. Say, did you intend one of us to go and decoy the guard away that time you raised your voice?"

"Sure. Recognized your voices—yours especially—when you passed, and heard you breathe as you crept back. You nearly spoilt the game by turning out the guard, but you saved it again handsomely."

"It's a marvel those Sikhs didn't shoot Jeremy in the dark," I answered.

"You bet it is," said Grim. "I guess he's too useful to be allowed to die just now."

He hung his head, thinking, as we walked side by side.

"That was a close shave, too —— close! Well, as you say, let's go rescue him."

CHAPTER VII

"You talk like a madman!"

GRIM changed the plan a little at the last minute. Mabel Ticknor left Jerusalem by train, as agreed, but Narayan Singh was sent that way too, to keep an eye on her. He being a Sikh, could sit in the corridor without exciting comment, and being dressed for the part of a more or less prosperous trader, he could travel first class without having to answer questions or allay suspicion.

Grim, Jeremy and I drove to Ludd in a hired auto, Grim and Jeremy both in Arab costume, and I trying to look like a tourist. Jeremy was supposed to be a travelled Arab intent on guiding me about Damascus for the usual consideration.

The platform was crowded, and we secured a compartment in the train without calling much attention to ourselves. There were British officers of all ranks, Egyptians, Jews, Greeks, refugee Armenians, Maltese, Kurds, a Turk or two, Circassians, men from as far off as Bokhara, Turkomans, Indians of all sorts, a sprinkling of Bedouins looking not quite so at home as in their native desert, and local Arabs by the score. About half of them were in a panic, encouraged to it by their shrill women-folk, fighting in a swarm for tickets at one small window, where an insolent Levantine demonstrated his capacity for self-determination by making as many people as possible miss the train.

I caught sight of Mabel Ticknor in the front compartment of our car, and Grim pointed out Yussuf Dakmar leaning through a window of the car behind. His face was fat, unwholesome, with small, cold eyes, an immoral nose, and a small mouth with pouting lips. The tarboosh he wore tilted at an angle heightened the general effect of arrogant self-esteem. He was an illustration of the ancient mystery—how is it that a man with such a face, and such insolence written all over him, can become a leader of other men and persuade them to hatch the eggs of treachery that he lays like a cuckoo in their nests?

He smirked at Grim suggestively as we went by, and Grim, of course, smirked back, with a sidewise inclination of the head in my direction, whereat Yussuf Dakmar withdrew himself, apparently satisfied.

"Now he'll waste a lot of time investigating you," said Grim in an undertone. "We'd better keep awake in turns, or he'll knife you."

"The toe of my boot to him!" I retorted. "One clean kick might solve this international affair!"

"Steady!" Grim answered. "We need

him until after leaving Haifa. The French agent wired, and they'll have a gang at Haifa ready for us; but Yussuf Dakmar will warn them off if we keep him hoping."

So we settled down into our compartment after a glance to make sure that Mabel was all right, and for about two minutes I imagined we were in for a lazy journey. Narayan Singh was on a camp-stool in the corridor, snoozing with one eye open like a faithful sheep-dog. It didn't seem possible for a creature like Yussuf Dakmar to make trouble for us, and I proposed that we should match coins for the first turn to go to sleep.

We had just pulled our coins out, and the engineer was backing the train in order to get her started, when Yussuf Dakmar arrived at our door, carrying his belongings, and claimed a seat on the strength of a lie about there being no room elsewhere.

There's something about a compartment on a train that makes whoever gets in first regard the rest of the world as intruders. Nobody would have been welcome, but we would have preferred a pig to Yussuf Dakmar. Jeremy, democrat of democrats, who had slept without complaining between the legs of a dead horse on a rain-swept battlefield, with a lousy Turkish prisoner hugging him close to share the blanket, was up in arms at once.

"*Imshi!*" he ordered bluntly.

But Yussuf Dakmar was delighted. The reception convinced him, if anything were needed to do that, that one of us really was guarding the secret letter; and he was one of those hogs anyhow, who glory in snouting in where they are plainly not wanted. He took the corner seat opposite Jeremy, tucked his legs up under him, produced a cigaret and smiled offensively. I'll concede this, though: I think the smile was meant to be ingratiating.

He pulled out a package wrapped in newspaper and began to eat before the train had run a mile. And you know, more men get killed because of *how* they eat than *by* the stuff they devour. If you don't believe that, try living in camp for a week or two with a man who chews meat with his mouth open. You'll feel the promptings of a murderer. I know a scientist, who swears that the real secret of the Cain and Abel story is that Abel sucked his gums at mealtime.

"You ought to be buried up to the neck and fed with a shovel!" Jeremy informed him in blunt English after listening to the solo for a while.

"Aha! That is the way they used to treat criminals in Persia," he answered pleasantly, with his mouth full of goat's milk cheese. "Only they put plaster of Paris in the hole, and when it rained the wretched man was squeezed until the blood came out of his mouth and eyes, and he died in agony. But how comes it that you speak to me in English? If we are both Arabs, why not talk the mother tongue?"

"My rump is my rump and the land is its ruler's," Jeremy answered in Arabic, quoting the rudest proverb he could think of on the spur of the moment.

"Ah! And who is its ruler? Who is to be its ruler?"

Yussuf Dakmar made a surreptitious face at Grim, and his little cold eyes shone like a hungry pariah dog's. It began to be interesting to watch his opening gambit.

"I have heard tales," he went on, "of a new ruler for this country. What do you think of Feisul's chance?"

As he said that he eyed me sideways swiftly and keenly.

Grim sat back in his own corner and folded up his legs, watching the game contentedly. Jeremy, intercepting Yussuf Dakmar's glance, put his own construction on it. He is a long lean man, but like the Fat Boy in Pickwick Papers he likes to make your flesh creep, and humor, to have full zest for him, has to be mischievous.

So he commenced by pulling out his weapons one by one. The first was a razor, which he sharpened, tested with his thumb suggestively, and then placed in his sock, studying Yussuf Dakmar's throat for a minute or so after that, as if expecting to have to use the razor on it presently.

As the effect of that wore off he pulled out a pistol. It was one of the kind that won't go off unless you pull the hammer back, but Yussuf Dakmar didn't know that, and if he had flesh and blood capable of creeping it's a safe assertion that they crept. Jeremy acted as if he didn't understand the weapon, and for fifteen minutes did more stunts with it than a puppy can do with a ball of twine. One of them, that interested Yussuf Dakmar awfully, was to point the pistol straight ahead, half-cocked, and try to get the hammer down by slapping it with the palm of his hand.

Most of our baggage was on the floor,

but one fairly heavy valise was in the rack over Yussuf Dakmar's head. Jeremy got up to examine it when the pistol had ceased to amuse him, and taking advantage of a jerk as the train slowed down, contrived to drop it into the Syrian's lap, who rather naturally swore; whereat Jeremy took offense, and accused him of being a descendant of Hanna, son of Manna, who lived for a thousand and one years and never enjoyed himself.

It was our turn to eat sandwiches after that, while Yussuf Dakmar recovered from his disgruntlement. But just before the meal was finished Jeremy revived the game by asking suddenly in an awe-struck whisper where "it" was. He slapped himself all over in a hurry, feeling for hidden pockets, and then came over and pretended to search me. There wasn't anything to do but fall in with his mood, so I resisted, searched my own pockets reluctantly, and said that we might as well take the next train back, since we had lost the important document.

Before we started we had put into a wallet the fake envelope that Grim had carried in his hand the previous night, and had entrusted the wallet to Jeremy in order to have an alibi ready for Mabel in case of need. Grim took up the cudgels now and reminded me respectfully, as a servant should when speaking to his master, that I had taken all proper precautions and could not be blamed in any event.

"But I think it will be found," he said hopefully. "*Inshallah*, it is not lost, but in the wallet in the pocket of that hare-brained friend of yours."

So Jeremy went back to his corner, searched for the wallet, found it after pretty nearly standing on his head to shake his clothes, examined it excitedly, and produced the fake envelope, flourishing it so violently that nobody, even with eyes like a hawk's, could have identified it with certainty.

Then he dropped it in among the baggage on the floor, and went down on his knees to pick it up again. There is no more finished expert at sleight of hand than he, so it vanished, and he swore he couldn't find it. In a well-simulated agony of nervousness he called on Yussuf Dakmar to get down and help him search, and the Syrian hadn't enough self-command left to pretend to hesitate; his cold eyes were nearly popping from his head as he knelt and groped. The chief subject of interest to me just then was how he proposed to retain the letter in the unlikely event of his finding it first.

It was a ridiculous search, because there wasn't really anywhere to look. After three bags had been lifted and their bottoms scrutinized the whole floor of the compartment lay naked to the eye, except where my feet rested. Jeremy insisted on my raising them, to the accompaniment of what he considered suitable comment on their size, turning his "behime end" meanwhile toward Yussuf Dakmar.

Grim chuckled and caught my eye. Yussuf Dakmar had walked straight into temptation, and was trying to search Jeremy's pockets from the rear—no easy matter, for he had to discover them first in the loose folds of the Arab costume.

Suddenly Jeremy's mood changed. He became suspicious—stood up, resumed his seat—and glared at Yussuf Dakmar, who retired into his corner and tried to seem unconscious of the gaze.

"I believe you are a thief—one of those light-fingered devils from El-Kalil!" said Jeremy suddenly, after about three minutes' silence. "I believe you have stolen my letter! Like the saint's ass, you are a clever devil, aren't you! Nevertheless, you are like a man without finger-nails, whose scratching does him no good! Your labor was in vain. Give me back the letter, or by Allah I will turn you upside down!"

Yussuf Dakmar denied the accusation with all the fervor that a blackguard generally does use when, for once, he is consciously innocent.

"By the Beard of the Prophet and on my honor I swear to you that I haven't touched your letter! I don't know where it is."

"Show me the Prophet's beard!" commanded Jeremy. "Show me your honor!"

"You talk like a madman! How can I show either?"

"Then how can you swear by them? Father of easy words and evil deeds, give me the letter back!"

Yussuf Dakmar appealed to me as presumably responsible for Jeremy.

"You saw, *Effendi*, didn't you? I tried to help him. But he who plays with the cat must suffer her claws, so now he accuses me of stealing. I call you to witness that I took nothing."

"You must excuse him," I answered. "That is a highly important letter. If it isn't found the consequences may be disastrous."

"By Allah, it shall be found!" exploded Jeremy glaring harder than ever at Yussuf Dakmar. "Look at his face! Look at his evil eyes! He came in here on purpose to spy on us and steal that letter! It is time to use my razor on him! I swear not by the Prophet's beard or anybody's honor, but by the razor in my sock that he has the letter and that I will have it back!"

Well: that was a challenge there was no side-stepping. Sure of being able to prove innocence, Yussuf Dakmar decided that a bold course was the best. He proceeded to empty his own pockets, laying the contents on the seat before Jeremy's eyes. And Jeremy watched like a puzzled puppy with his brow wrinkled. The process took time, because he was wearing one of those imitation Western suits, of prehistoric cut but up-to-date with every imaginable pocket that a tailor could invent. Their contents included a dagger and a clasp-knife with a long blade sharpened on both edges, but no pistol.

"Now are you satisfied?" he demanded, after turning inside-out the two "secret" pockets in the lining of his vest.

"Less than ever!" Jeremy retorted. "Until I see you naked I will not believe you!"

Yussuf Dakmar turned to me again. He was a patient spy, if ever there was one.

"Do you think I should be put to that indignity?" he asked. "Shall I undress myself?"

"By Allah, unless you do it I will cut your clothes off with my razor!" Jeremy announced.

We drew up at a station then, and had to wait until the train went on again. By that time Yussuf Dakmar had made up his mind. He slipped off his jacket and vest, and began to unfasten his collar-button, as the train gained speed.

EVERYTHING went smoothly until he stood up to remove his pants. He had the top of them in both hands when Jeremy seized him suddenly by the elbows and spun him face about. And there the letter lay, face-downward on the seat he had just left, bent and a little crinkled in proof that he had been sitting on it for some minutes past.

Now it doesn't make any difference whether a man meant to take off his trousers or not. In a crisis, if they are unfastened, he will hold them up. It's like catching a monkey; you put corn into a narrow-necked basket. The monkey inserts his arm, fills his hand with corn, and tries to pull it out, but can't unless he lets go of the corn, which he won't do. So you catch him. Yussuf Dakmar held up his pants with one hand, and tried to free himself from Jeremy with the other. If he had let go his pants he might have seized the envelope and discovered what a fake it was; but he wouldn't do that. It was I who pounced on it and stowed it away carefully in my inner pocket.

Yussuf Dakmar's emotions were poignant and mixed, but he was no quitter. He thought he knew definitely where the letter was now, and the wolf glance with which he favored me changed swiftly to a smile of ingratiating politeness.

"I am glad you have recovered what you lost," he said smiling, as he fastened up his pants and resumed his coat. "This friend of yours—or is he your servant?—made me nervous with his threats, or I should certainly have found it for you sooner."

And now Grim resumed a hand. The last thing he wished was that Yussuf Dakmar should consider his quest too difficult, for then he would probably summon assistance at Haifa. Encouragement was the proper cue, now that Jeremy had tantalized him with a glimpse of the bait. We had nothing to fear from him unless he should lose heart.

"The value of a sum lies in the answer," he said, quoting one of those copy-book proverbs with which all Syrians love to clinch an argument.

"The letter is in its owner's pocket. The accuser should now apologize, and we can spend the rest of the journey pleasantly."

Jeremy proceeded to apologize—

"So you're not such a thief as you look!"

Then he provided entertainment. He drew out the razor and did stunts with it, juggling it with open blade from hand to hand—pretending to drop it and always catching it again within a fraction of an inch of Yussuf Dakmar's person. By and by he juggled with coins, match-box, cigars, razor and anything he could lay his hands on.

"*Mashallah!*" exclaimed the Syrian at last, his face all sweaty with excitement as he shrank back to avoid the spinning razor. "Where did you learn such accomplishments."

"Learn them?" answered Jeremy, still juggling. "I am a *dervaish.* I was born, not taught. I can ride through the air on cannon-balls, and whatever I wish for is mine the next minute. Look: I have one piastre. I wish for twenty. What do I do? I spin it in the air—catch it—d'you hear them? There you are—twenty! Count 'em if you like."

"A *dervaish?* A holy person? You? Where do you come from?"

"I was born in the belly of the South Wind," answered Jeremy. "Where I come from, every shell-fish has a pearl in it and gold is so common that the cattle wear it in their teeth. I can talk three languages at once and swear in six, use sulfur for tobacco, eat sardines without opening the can, and flavor my food for choice with gunpowder.

"I've been everywhere, seen everything, heard all the lies, and I found that big *effendi* in Jerusalem. I saw him first. He calls himself Ramsden, which is derived from the name of a creature bearing wool, which in turn is a synonym for money. He's on his way to supply Feisul with money, and I'm going to show him the streets of Damascus. Anything else you want to know?"

"Supply Feisul with money? That is interesting. American money perhaps? An American banker by any chance?"

"Nothing to do with chance. He's a father of certainties. Didn't he give me that letter to keep, and didn't I find a safe place for it between you and the cushion? Yes, I put it there. I'm an honest man, but I have my reasonable doubts about this other fellow. Ramsden *effendi* found him somewhere, and engaged him as a servant without asking me. Perhaps he's honest. Only Allah knows men's hearts. But he hasn't got an honest face like yours, and when payday comes I shall hide my money."

"So you know Damascus?" answered Yussuf Dakmar. "I hope you will come and see me in Damascus. I will you give my address. If Ramsden *effendi* has only engaged you temporarily, perhaps I can show you a way to make money with those accomplishments of yours."

"Make money?" answered Jeremy, prattling away like a madman. "I am weary of the stuff. I'm hunting the world over in search of a friend. Nobody loves me. I want to find some one who'll believe the lies I tell him without expecting me to believe the truth he tries to foist on me. I want to find a man as tricky with his brains as I am with my hands. He must be a politician and a spy, because I love excitement. That's why I called you a spy. If you were one, you might have admitted it, and then we could have been friends, like two yolks in one eggshell. But I see you're only a shell without a yolk in it. Who cleaned you?"

"How long have you been in the service of Ramsden *effendi?*" Yussuf Dakmar asked him.

"Not long, and I am tired of it. He is strong, and his fist is heavy. When he gets drunk he is difficult to carry upstairs to bed, and if I am also drunk the feat is still more difficult. It is a mystery how such a man as he should be entrusted with a secret mission, for he drinks with any one. Aha! He scowls at me because I tell the truth about him, but if I had a bottle of whisky to offer him he would soon look pleasant again, and would give me a drink too, when he had swallowed all he could hold."

If he had really been my servant I would naturally have kicked him off the train for a fraction of such impudence. I didn't exactly know what to do. There is a thoughtful motive behind every apparently random absurdity that Jeremy gets off, but I was uncomfortably conscious of the fact that my wits don't work fast enough to follow such volatile maneuvers. Perhaps it's the Scotian blood in me. I can follow a practical argument fast enough, when the axioms are all laid down and we're agreed on the subject.

However, Grim came to my rescue. He had his pencil out, and contrived to flick a piece of paper into my lap unseen by Yussuf Dakmar.

"Jeremy's cue is good," the note ran. "Dismiss him for talking about you to a stranger. Trust him to do the rest."

So I acted the part of an habitually heavy drinker in a fit of sudden rage, and dismissed Jeremy from my service on the spot.

"Very well," he answered blandly. "Allah makes all things easy. Let us hope that other fellow finds it easy to put you to bed tonight! Allah is likewise good, for I have my ticket to Damascus, and all I need to beg for is a bed and food at Haifa."

I muttered something in reply about his impudence, and the conversation ceased abruptly. But at the end of ten minutes or so Yussuf Dakmar went out into the corridor, signaling to Jeremy to follow him.

CHAPTER VIII

"He'll forgive any one who brings him whisky."

YOU remember, of course, that line that Shakespeare put into the mouth of Puck? "What fools these mortals be!" The biggest fools are the extra smart ones, whose pride and peculiar joy it is to "beat the game."

Yussuf Dakmar assessed all other humans as grist for his mill. Character to him was expressed in degrees of folly and sheer badness. Virtue existed only as a weakness to be exploited. The question that always exercised him was, wherein does the other fellow's weakness lie? It's a form of madness. Where a sane man looks for strength and honesty that he can yoke up with, a Yussuf Dakmar spies out human failings; and whereas most of us in our day have mistaken pyrites for fine gold, which did not hurt more than was good for us, he ends by mistaking gold for dross.

You can persuade such a man without the slightest difficulty that you are a fool and a crook. Jeremy had turned the trick for his own amusement as much as anything, although his natural vein of shrewdness probably suggested the idea. Yussuf Dakmar, ready to believe all evil and no good of anyone, was convinced that he had to deal with a scatter-brained Arab who could be used for almost any purpose, and Jeremy's riotous bent for jumping from one thing to another fixed the delusion still more firmly.

But Lord! he had caught a Tatar. Outside at the end of the corridor, in full view, but out of earshot of Narayan Singh, Yussuf Dakmar made a proposal to Jeremy that was almost perfect in its naive obliquity. There was nothing original or even unusual about it, except the circumstances, time and place. Green goods men and blue sky stock salesmen, racecourse touts and sure-thing politicians get away with the same proposition in the U. S. every day of the week, and pocket millions by it. Only, just as happens to all such gentry on occasion, Yussuf Dakmar had the wrong fish in his net.

He jerked his head toward where Narayan Singh sat stolid and sleepy-looking on a camp-stool with his curly black beard resting on the heel of one hand.

"Do you know that man?" he asked.

"*Wallah!* How should I know him?" Jeremy answered. "He looks like a Hindu thinking of reincarnation. *Inshallah,* he will turn into a tiger presently!"

"Beware of him! He is an Administration spy. He is watching me talk to you, and perhaps he will ask you afterward what I have said. You must be very careful how you answer him."

"I will tell him you asked me for a love-potion for the engine-driver's wife," Jeremy answered. "I am listening. What is it you are really going to say?"

"That master of yours—that Ramsden, who dismissed you so tyrannically just now——"

"That drunkard? There is nothing interesting to be said about him," Jeremy answered. "He is a fool who has paid my fare as far as Damascus. May Allah reward him for it."

"Are you telling me the truth?" demanded Yussuf Dakmar, fixing his eyes sternly on Jeremy's.

Your con man never overlooks a chance to put his intended victim on the defensive at an early stage in the proceedings.

"How can he have paid your fare as far as Damascus? This line only goes to Haifa, where you have to change trains and buy another ticket."

"I see you are a clever devil," Jeremy retorted. "May Allah give you a belly-ache, if that is where you keep your brains! It was I who bought the tickets. The fool gave me sufficient money for three first class fares all the way to Damascus, and I have the change. He forgot that when he dismissed me."

"Then you won't need to beg board and lodging in Haifa?"

"Oh, yes. I need my money for another matter. It is high time I married, and a fellow without money has to put up with any toothless hag that nobody else will take."

"So you hope to find a wife in Damascus?"

"*Inshallah,*" Jeremy answered piously.

"Well; I will find you a good-looking girl for wife, provided you first prove that you will make a good son-in-law. I take men as I find them, not as they represent themselves. He who wishes for the fire must first chop wood. You understand me?"

"*Wallah!* I can chop wood like an ax with two heads. Is the woman your daughter?"

"That is as may be. Let us talk business. I reward my friends, but wo betide the fool who betray's my confidence!" said Yussuf Dakmar darkly.

"I see you are a man after my own heart," answered Jeremy, "a thorough fellow who stops at nothing! Good! Allah must have brought us two together for an evil purpose, being doubtless weary of the League of Nations! Unbosom! I am like a well, into which men drop things and never see them any more."

"You are a fine rascal, I can see that clearly! So you think that Allah is cooking up evil, do you? Tee-hee! That is an original idea, and there may be something in it. Let us hope there is something in it for us two, at all events. Now, as to that fellow Ramsden——"

"Avoid him unless he is drunk," advised Jeremy. "The weight of his fist would drive a man like you like a nail into a tree."

"Who fears such an ox?" the Syrian retorted. "A fly can sting him; a little knife can bleed him; a red rag can enrage him; and the crows who devour that sort of meat won't worry as to whether he was killed according to ritual! He has money for Feisul, has he? Well, never mind. He has a letter as well, and that is what I want. Will you get it for me?"

"Do you need it badly?"

"By Allah, I must have it!"

"By Allah, then I am in good luck, for that makes me indispensable, doesn't it? And an indispensable man can demand what he pleases!"

"Not at all," Yussuf Dakmar answered frowning. "I have taken a fancy to you, or I would see you to the devil. When we reach Haifa, ten or even twenty men will present themselves to do this business for me. Or, if I choose, I can use that fellow Omar who is traveling with Ramsden; he would like to be my accomplice, but I don't trust him very much."

"In that you are perfectly right," answered Jeremy. "He is not at all the sort of man for you to trust. It wouldn't surprize me to learn that he has warned Ramsden against you already! Better beware of him!"

According to Jeremy's account of the conversation afterward, it was not until that moment that he saw clearly how to prevent Yussuf Dakmar from calling in thugs to attack me either at Haifa or at some point between there and Damascus. Until then he had been feeling his way along—"spieling" as he calls it—keeping his man interested while he made all ready for the next trick.

"To tell you the truth," he went on, "Omar isn't that fellow's real name. He is a sharp one, and he is after the letter every bit as much as you are."

"How do you know that?"

"*Wallah*, how not? Because he himself told me! Just like you, he tried to get me into partnership. He offered me a big reward, but he's not like you, so I didn't believe him; and he has no daughter; I've no use for a man who hasn't a good-looking daughter. What he's afraid of is that some one else may get the letter first. And he's a desperate fellow. He told me his intentions and whether you believe me or not, they're worthy of a wolf!"

"I'm glad I resolved to take you into confidence," said Yussuf Dakmar, nodding. "Go on; I'm listening. Tell me what he told you."

"He plans to get hold of the letter between Haifa and Damascus. He thinks that's safest, because it's over the border and there won't be any British officers to interfere. Somewhere up the Lebanon Valley, after most of the passengers have left the train, looks good to him. But I think he knows who you are."

"Yes, he knows me. Go on."

"And he's afraid you'll get help and forestall him. So he's going to watch Ramsden like a cat watching a mouse-hole, and he's going to watch you, too. And if anybody tries to interfere at Haifa, or if men get on the train between Haifa and Damascus, who look like being accomplices of yours, he's going to murder Ramsden there and then, seize the letter, and make a jump for it! You see, he's one of those mean fellows—a regular dog in the manger; he'd rather get caught by the police and hanged for murder than let anybody else get what he's after. Oh, believe me, I didn't trust him! I laughed when he made his proposal to me."

"Now that is very interesting," said Yussuf Dakmar. "To tell you the truth I had a little experience with him last night myself. He came on me by accident in a certain place, and we conversed. I pretended to agree with him for the sake of appearances, but I formed a very poor opinion of him. Well; suppose we put him out of the way first; how would that be? You look like a strong man. Suppose you watch for an opportunity to push him off the train?"

"Oh, that would never do!" Jeremy answered, shaking his head from side to side. "You mustn't forget that Indian who sits in the corridor. It was you yourself who told me he is an Administration spy. If he suspects you already, he will suspect me for having talked with you, and will watch me; and if I try to push that fellow Omar off the train, he will come to the rescue. Surely you don't expect me to fight both of them at once! Besides; you must consider Ramsden.

"That fellow Ramsden is big and strong, but he is a nervous wreck. Give him the least excuse and he will yell for the police like a baby crying for its mother! He looks on Omar as his bodyguard now that he has dismissed me; and if Omar should get killed, or disappear between here and Haifa, Ramsden would demand an escort of police. In fact, I think he'd lose courage altogether and put that letter in a strong-room in the Haifa Bank. What is the letter anyway? What's in it? How much will you pay me if I get it for you?"

"Never mind what's in it. Will you get it, that's the point—will you get it and bring it to me?"

"That isn't the point at all," answered Jeremy. "The point is how much will you pay me if I do that?"

"Very well, I will pay you fifty pounds."

"*Mashallah!* You must need it awfully badly. I could have been hired for fifty shillings to do a much more dangerous thing!"

"Well, twenty-five pounds ought to be enough. I will pay you twenty-five."

"Nothing less than fifty!" Jeremy retorted. "I always get fifty of everything. Fifty lashes in the jail—fifty beans at mealtime—fifty pairs of boots to clean for Ramsden—fifty is my lucky number. I have made forty-nine attempts to get married, and the next time I shall succeed. If it isn't the woman's lucky number too, that's her affair. Show me the fifty pounds."

"I haven't that much with me," answered Yussuf Dakmar. "I will pay you in Damascus."

"All right. Then I will give you the letter in Damascus."

"No, no! Get it as soon as possible."

"I will."

"And give it to me immediately. Then if you like you can stay close to me until I pay you in Damascus."

"'The ass is invited to a wedding to carry wood and water, and they beat him with one of the sticks he carried,'" Jeremy quoted. "No, no, no! I will get the letter, for I know how. After I have it you may keep close to me until we reach Damascus. I will show it to you, but I won't give it to you until after I get the fifty pounds."

"Very well, since you are so untrustful."

"Untrustful? I am possessed by a demon of mistrust! Why? Because I know I am not the worst person in the world, and what I can think of, another might do. Now, if you were I and I were you, which God forbid, because I am a happy fellow and you look bilious, and you stole the letter for me because I promised to pay you in Damascus, but wouldn't give me the letter until I paid you, do you know what I would think of doing? I would promise a few tough fellows ten pounds among them to murder you. Thus I would get the letter and save forty pounds."

"Ah? But I am not that kind of man," said Yussuf Dakmar.

"Well; you will learn what kind of man you are in the next world when you reach the Judgment Seat. What is most interesting now is the kind of fellow I am. I will steal the letter from Ramsden, and keep it until you pay me in Damascus. But I shan't sleep, and I shall watch you; and if I suspect you of making plans to have me robbed or murdered I shall make such a noise that everybody will come running, and then I shall be a celebrity but they'll put you in jail."

"Very well; you steal the letter, and I'll keep close to you," said Yussuf Dakmar. "But how are you going to do it, now that Ramsden has dismissed you from his service?"

"Oh, that's easy. You get me some whisky, and I'll take it to him for a peace offering. He'll forgive any one who brings him whisky."

"Tee-hee! That is quite an idea. Yes. Now—how can I get whisky on the train? If only I could get some! I have a little soporific in a paper packet that could be mixed with the whisky to make him sleep soundly. Wait here while I walk down the train and see what I can find."

Yussuf Dakmar was gone twenty minutes,

and whether he begged, bought or stole did not transpire, but he returned with a pint flask containing stuff that looked and smelt enough like whisky to get by if there had been a label on the bottle. He poured a powder into it in Jeremy's presence, the two of them squatting on the floor of the corridor with the bottle between them so that no one else might see what was taking place.

"Now, you would better get rid of that fellow Omar while you attend to this," Yussuf Dakmar cautioned him. "Can you think of any way of doing that?"

"Oh, easily!" Jeremy answered. "He is a great one for the women. I will tell him there is a pretty Armenian girl in the car behind. He will run like any other Turk to have a good look at her."

"Very well. I will wait here. But understand now; I am a dangerous man. You have fortune in one hand, but destruction in the other!"

"Very well; but this may take me an hour, and if you grow impatient, and that Indian sees you peering into the compartment after having watched you and me talking all this time, he'll grow suspicious."

"All right; I'll go to the car behind. As soon as you have the letter, come and tell me."

So Jeremy came back and entertained Grim and me with a burlesque account of the interview, after whispering to Narayan Singh to give the alarm in the event of Yussuf Dakmar returning forward to spy on us. Grim put the doped whisky into his valise after a sniff at it, instead of throwing it out of the window at my suggestion; and after a suitable interval he went out in the part of the Turk to look for the imaginary beautiful Armenian. Then I gave Jeremy the fake letter back, and went to sleep.

So it's no use asking me what the country looks like between Ludd and Haifa. I didn't even wake up to see the Lake of Tiberias, Sea of Galilee, or Bahr Tubariya, as it is variously called. A rather common sickness is what Sir Richard Burton called Holylanditis and I've had it, as well as the croup and measles in my youth. Some folk never recovered from it, and to them a rather ordinary sheet of water and ugly modern villages built on ruins look like the pictures that an opium smoker sees.

The ruins and the history do interest me, but you can't see them from the train, and after a night without sleep there seemed to me something more profitable in view than to hang from a window and buy fish that undoubtedly had once swum in Galilee water, but that cost a most unrighteous price and stank as if straight from a garbage heap.

The whole train reeked of putrid fish when we reached Haifa in the evening, in time to watch the sun go down across the really glorious Bay of Acre.

CHAPTER IX

"The rest will be simple!"

HAIFA was crowded with Syrians of all sorts, and there were two or three staff officers in the uniform of Feisul's army lounging on the platform, who conned new arrivals with a sort of child-like solicitude, as if by looking in a man's face they could judge whether he was friendly to their cause or not.

Mabel had wired to her friend, and was met at the station, so we had nothing to worry over for the present on her score. Our own troubles began when we reached the only hotel and found it crowded. The proprietor, a little wizened, pock-marked Arab in a black alpaca jacket and yellow pants, with a tarboosh balanced forward at a pessimistic angle, suggested that there might be guests in the hotel who would let us share their beds—

"Although there will be no reduction of the price to either party in that event," he hastened to explain.

It was a wonder of a hotel. You could smell the bugs and the sanitary arrangements from the front-door-step, and although the whole place had been limewashed, dirt from all over the Near East was accumulating on the dead white, making it look leprous and depressing.

The place fronted on a main street, with its back toward the bay of Acre at a point where scavengers used the beach for a dumping place.

There was a hostel for British officers about a mile away, where Grim might have been able to procure beds for the whole party; but I noticed no less than five men who followed us up from the station and seemed to be keeping a watchful eye on Yussuf Dakmar and it was a sure bet that if we should show our hands so far as to mess with British officers, the train next day would be packed with men to whom murder would be simple amusement.

Yet Grim and Jeremy needed sleep and so did Narayan Singh. We offered to rent an outhouse for the night—a cellar—the roof; but there was nothing doing and it was Yussuf Dakmar at last who solved the problem for us.

He found a crony of his, who had occupied for several days a room containing two beds. With unheard-of generosity, accompanied, however, by a peculiar display of yellow teeth and more of the jaundiced whites of his eyes than I cared to see, this individual offered to go elsewhere for the night and to place the room at my disposal.

"But there is this about it," he explained. "Where I am going there is no room for my friend Yussuf Dakmar Bey, so I must ask you to let him share this with you. You and he could each have a bed, of course, but it seems to me that your servants look wearier than you do. I suggest then that you take one bed, *effendi*, and share it with my friend Yussuf Dakmar Bey, leaving the other to your servants, who I hope will be suitably grateful for the consideration shown them."

Grim nodded to me from behind the Syrians' backs, and I jumped at the offer. Payment was refused. The man explained that he had the room by the week and the loan of it to me for one night would cost him nothing. In fact, he acted courteously and with considerable evidence of breeding, merely requesting my permission to lock the big closet where he kept his personal belongings and to take the key away with him. Even if we had been in a mood to cavil it would have been difficult to find fault, for it was a spacious, clean and airy room—three characteristics, each of which is as scarce as the other in that part of the world.

The beds stood foot to foot along the right wall as you entered. Against the opposite wall was a cheap wooden washstand and an enormous closet built of olive-wood sunk into a deep recess. The thing was about eight feet wide and reached to the ceiling; you couldn't tell the depth because he locked it at once and pocketed the key, and it fitted into the recess so neatly that a knife-blade would hardly have gone into the crack.

Outside the bedroom door, in a lobby furnished with odds and ends, was a wicker-work sofa that would do finely for Narayan Singh, and that old soldier didn't need to have it pointed out to him. Without word or sign from us he threw his kit on the floor, unrolled his blankets, removed his boots, curled up on the sofa and if he didn't go to sleep at once, gave such a perfect imitation of it that somebody's fox-terrier came and sniffed him and recognizing a campaigner after his own wandering heart, jumped on his chest and settled down to sleep too.

As soon as our host had left the room, all bows and toothy smiles, Jeremy with his back to me drew from one pocket the letter he was supposed to have stolen from me, flourished it in Yussuf Dakmar's face, and concealed it carefully in another. Then a new humorous notion occurred to him. He pulled it out again, folded it in the pocket wallet in which he had carried it from the first, wrapped the whole in a handkerchief, which he knotted carefully and then handed it to me.

"*Effendi*," he said, "you are a fierce master and a mighty drunkard, but a man without guile. Keep that till the morning. Then, if Omar wants to steal it he will have to murder you instead of me, and I would rather sleep than die. But you must give it back at dawn, because the prayers are in it that a very holy ma'lim wrote for me, and unless I read those prayers properly tomorrow's train will come to grief before we reach Damascus."

He acted the part perfectly of one of those half-witted, wholly shrewd mountebanks, who pick up a living by taking advantage of tolerance and good nature. You've all seen the type. It's commonest at race-meetings but you'll find it anywhere in the world where vagrant men of means foregather.

Again Yussuf Dakmar's face became a picture of suppressed emotion. I pocketed the wallet with the same matter of fact air with which I have accepted a servant's money to keep safe for him scores of times. He believed me to be a drunkard, who had been thoroughly doped that day and would probably drink hard that night to drown the after-taste. It ought to be easy to rob me while I slept. Any fool could have read his thoughts.

He came down and ate supper with us at a trestle table in the dimly lighted dining-room, and I encouraged his new-born optimism by ordering two bottles of whisky to take up-stairs. Jeremy, who can't be happy unless playing his part for all it's worth, became devoutly religious and made a tremendous fuss because ham was put on the table. He accused the proprietor of using pig's fat to smear all the cooking utensils, demanded to see the kitchen, and finally refused to eat anything but *leban*, which is a sort of curds. If Yussuf Dakmar had entertained suspicions of Jeremy's real nationality they were all resolved by the time that meal was finished.

But the five men who had followed us from the station sat in the dark at a table in the far corner of the room and watched every move we made. When the coffee was brought I sat smoking and surly over it, as if my head ached from the day's drink; Grim and Jeremy, aching for sleep but refusing like good artists to neglect a detail of their part, went to another table and played backgammon, betting quarrelsomely; and at last one of the five men walked over and touched Yussuf Dakmar's shoulder. At once he followed all five of them out of the room, whereat Grim and Jeremy promptly went to bed. It was so obviously my turn to stay awake that Grim didn't even trouble to remind me of it.

So I took the whisky up-stairs, noticed that Narayan Singh was missing from the couch where he had gone to sleep, although the fox-terrier was snoring so loud in his blankets that I had to look twice in the dim light. I mentioned that fact to Grim who merely smiled as he got between the sheets. Then I went down to the street to get exercise and fresh air. I didn't go far, but strode up and down in front of the hotel a quarter of a mile or so in each direction, keeping in the middle of the street.

I had made the fourth or fifth turn when Narayan Singh came out and accosted me under the lamp-light.

"Pardon," he called aloud in English, "does the *sahib* know where I can find a druggist's open at this hour? I have a toothache and need medicine."

"Come and I'll show you a place," said I with the patronizing air of a tourist showing off his knowledge, and we strode along together down the street, he holding one hand to his jaw.

"Thus and so it happened, *sahib*," he began as soon as we had gone a safe distance. "I lay sleeping, having kept my belly empty that I might wake easily. There came Yussuf Dakmar and five men brushing by me, and they all went into a room four doors beyond the *sahib's*. The room next beyond that one is occupied by an officer *sahib*, who fought at El-Arish alongside my battalion. Between him and me is a certain understanding based on past happenings in which we both had a hand. He is not as some other *sahibs*, but a man who opens both ears and his heart, and when I knocked on his door he opened it and recognized me.

" 'Well?' said he. 'Why not come and see me in the morning?'

" '*Sahib*,' said I, 'for the sake of El-Arish, let me in quickly, and close the door!'

"So he did, wondering and not pleased to be disturbed by a Sikh at such an hour. And I said to him—

" '*Sahib*,' said I, 'am I a *badmash?*' (Scoundrel.)

" 'No,' said he, 'not unless you changed your morals when you left the service.'

"Said I, 'I am still in the service.'

" 'Good,' said he. 'What then?'

" 'I go listening again in No-man's-land,' said I, and he whistled softly. 'Is there not a roof below your window?' I asked him, and he nodded.

" 'Then let me use it, *sahib*, and return the same way presently.'

"So he threw back the shutter, asking no more questions, and I climbed out. The window of the room where Yussuf Dakmar and the five were stood open but the lattice shutter was closed tight, so that I could stand up on the flat roof of the kitchen and listen without being seen. And *sahib*, I could recognize the snarl of Yussuf Dakmar's voice even before my ear was laid to the open lattice. He was like a dog at bay.

"The other five were angry with him. They were accusing him of playing false. They swore that a great sum could be had for that letter, which they should share between them. Said a voice I did not recognize: 'If the French will pay one price they will pay another; what does money matter to them, if they can make out a case against Feisul? Will they not have Syria? The thing is as simple as twice two,' said he. 'The huntsman urges on the hounds but unless he is cleverer than they, who eats the meat? The French regard us as animals, I tell you! Very well; let us live up to the part and hunt like animals, since he who has the name should have the game as well;

and when we have done the work and they want to booty let them be made aware that animals must eat! We will set our own price on that document.'

" 'And as for this Yussuf Dakmar,' said another man, 'let him take a back seat unless he is willing to share and share alike with us. He is not difficult to kill!'

"And at that, *sahib*, Yussuf Dakmar flew into a great rage and called them fools of complicated kinds.

" 'Like hounds without a huntsman, ye will overrun the scent!' said he; and he spoke more like a man than any of them, although not as a man to be liked or trusted. 'Who are ye to clap your fat noses on the scent I found and tell me the how and whither of it? It may be that I can get that letter tonight. Surely I can get it between this place and Damascus; and no other can do that, for I, and I only, know where it is. Nor will I tell!' And they answered all together, 'We will make you tell!'

"But he said, 'All that ye five fools can do is to interfere. Easy to kill me, is it? Well; perhaps. It has been tried. But, if so then though ye are jackals, kites and vultures all in one with the skill of chemists added, ye can never extract secret knowledge from a dead man's brain. Then that letter will reach Feisul tomorrow night; and the French, who speak of you now as of animals, will call you what? Princes? Noblemen?'

"I suppose they saw the point of that, *sahib*, for they changed their tone without, however, becoming friendly to Yussuf Dakmar. Thieves of that sort know one another, and trust none, and it is all a lie, *sahib*, about there being any honor among them. Fear is the only tie that binds thieves and they proceeded to make Yussuf Dakmar afraid.

"There seems to be one among them, *sahib*, who is leader. He has a thin voice like a eunuch's, and unlike the others swears seldom.

"This father of a thin voice accepted the situation. He said:

" 'Well and good. Let Yussuf Dakmar do the hunting for us. It is sufficient that we hunt Yussuf Dakmar. Two of us occupy the room next to Ramsden's. If Yussuf Dakmar needs aid in the night, let him summon us by scratching with his nails on the closet door. The rest will be simple. There are four in this besides us five; so if we count Yussuf Dakmar that makes ten who share the reward. Shall Yussuf Dakmar grow fat, while nine of us starve? I think not! Let him get the letter, and give it to me. We will hide it, and I will deal with the French. If he fails tonight, let him try again tomorrow on the train. But we five will also take that train to Damascus, and unless that letter is in my hands before the journey's end, then Yussuf Dakmar dies! Is that agreed?'

"All except Yussuf Dakmar agreed to it. He was very angry and called them leeches, whereat they laughed, saying that leeches only suck enough and then fall off, whereas they would take all or kill. They made him understand it, taking a great oath together to slay him without mercy unless he should get the letter and give it to them before the train reaches Damascus tomorrow evening.

"Well, *sahib;* he agreed presently, not with any effort at good grace, but cursing while he yielded.

"In truth, *sahib*, it is less fear than lack of sleep that Yussuf Dakmar feels. I could hear him yawn through the window lattice. Now a man in that condition is likely to act early in the night for fear that sleep may otherwise get the better of him, and the *sahib* will do well to be keenly alert from the first. I shall be asleep on that couch outside the door and will come if called, so the *sahib* would better not lock the door but should call loud in case of need, because I also have been long awake and may sleep heavily."

"Suppose I walk the streets all night?" said I. "Wouldn't that foil them?"

"Nay, *sahib*, but the reverse; for if Yussuf Dakmar should miss you after midnight he would go in search of you, with those five in turn tracking him. And as for finding you, that would be a simple matter for every night-thief and beggar waiting for the dawn would give attention to such a big man as you and would report your movements. All six would come on you in the dark and would kill you surely. Then, as if that were not bad enough, having searched you they would learn that the letter in your possession is not the right one; and the trail of the right one would be that much easier to detect."

"Then come with me," said I, "and we'll make a night of it together. You and I can defend ourselves against those six."

"Doubtless, *sahib*. But my place is within hail of Jimgrim. No, it is best that you see this matter through tonight between four walls. Only remember, *sahib*, that though a man on duty may feign sleep, it is wiser not to, because sleep steals on us unawares!"

So I returned to the bedroom where Grim and Jeremy were snoring a halleluja chorus; but Yussuf Dakmar hadn't returned yet. I took advantage of the Syrian's absence to open Grim's valise, remove the bottle of doped whisky and set it on the table close to the window beside the two bottles that I had bought downstairs—one of which, for the sake of appearances, I opened just as Yussuf Dakmar entered, smiling to conceal anxiety.

CHAPTER X

"You made a bad break that time."

GRIM was in Mephistophelian humor. He can sleep cat-fashion, for sixty seconds at a time, with all his wits about him in the intervals, and likes to feel in the crook of his own forefinger the hidden hair-trigger of events. I don't think Jeremy was awake when I first entered the room, although it suited Grim's humor that he should be presently; but you would have sworn they were both unconscious, judging by the see-saw, bass and baritone snoring.

I poured out whisky, drank a little of it grouchily, and watched Yussuf Dakmar into bed. He didn't take many of his clothes off and even by candle-light you could see the shape of the knife concealed under his shirt. He sat cross-legged on the bed, presumably praying, and as I didn't like the look of him I blew out the candle.

Instantly, pinched and prompted by James Schuyler Grim, Jeremy sat up and yammered profanely at the darkness, vowing he couldn't see to sleep without a light in the room. I tinkled a tumbler against a whisky bottle, and Jeremy instantly swore that he heard burglars. Sitting up and whirling his pillow he knocked Yussuf Dakmar off the bed on to the floor.

So I lit the candle again, after emptying my glass of whisky into a spittoon; whereat Jeremy quoted the Koran about the fate of drunkards and, getting out of bed, apologized to Yussuf Dakmar like a courtier doing homage to a king.

"Your honor was born under a lucky star," he assured him. "I usually shoot or stab, but the pillow was the first thing handy."

The Syrian had hard work to keep his temper, for he had fallen on the haft of the hidden knife and it hurt him between two ribs, where a poorly conditioned man is extra sensitive. However, he mumbled something and crawled between the sheets.

Then Grim vowed that he couldn't sleep with a light so I blew out the candle, and in about two minutes the steady see-saw snoring resumed. I took the opportunity to empty half the contents of a whisky bottle into the spittoon, and after lighting a pipe proceeded to clink a tumbler at steady intervals as evidence of debauch well under way.

Except for the clink and bump of the tumbler, and once when I filled and relit the pipe, all was quiet for half an hour, when Yussuf Dakmar piped up suddenly and asked me whether I didn't intend to come to bed.

"I will not trouble you, *effendi*. I will keep over to my side. There is plenty of room in the bed for the two of us."

As he spoke I heard a movement of the bed-clothes as Grim pinched Jeremy awake again. I answered before Jeremy could horn in.

"Hic! You 'pect me 'nto bed full o' snakes? Never sleep 'slong as venomous reptiles waiting! Hic! You stay 'n bed an' keep 'em 'way from me!"

Well: Jeremy didn't want any better cue than that. He got up, lit the candle and explained to me with great wealth of Arabic theosophy that the snakes I saw were mere delusions because Allah never made them; and I tried to look utterly drunk, staring at him with dropped jaw and droopy eyelids, knocking an empty bottle over with my elbow by way of calling attention to it.

"Get into bed, *effendi*," Jeremy advised me, feeding the cue back, since I was in the middle of the stage.

"Not into that bed!" I answered, shaking my head solemnly. "That f'ler put snakes in on purpose. Why's he sober when I'm drunk? I won't sleep in bed with sober man. Let him get drunk too, an' both see snakes. Then I'll sleep with him!"

Jeremy's roving eye fell on the small doped bottle that I had taken from Grim's valise. Looking preternaturally wise, he walked over to Yussuf Dakmar's bed, sat down on it with his back toward me and proceeded to unfold a plan.

"Allah makes all things easy," he began. "It is lawful to take all precautions to confound the infidel. We shall never get that drunkard to bed as long as there's any whisky, so let's encourage him to drink it all. When it's gone he'll sleep on the floor and we'll get some peace. It's a good chance for us to drink whisky without committing sin! We needn't take much—just one drink each, and then he'll swallow the rest like a hog to prevent our getting any more. You look as if a glass of whisky would do you good. That fellow Omar is asleep and won't see us, so nobody can tell tales afterwards. It's a good opportunity. Come on!"

I had sat so that Yussuf Dakmar couldn't see what I was doing and poured out the liquor in advance, arranging the glasses so that Yussuf Dakmar would take the doped stuff—a perfectly un-Christian proceeding, I admit. Christians are scarce when you get right down to cases. Most of us in extremity prefer Shakespeare's adage about hoisting engineers. It gets results so much more quickly than turning the other cheek. At any rate, I own up.

Yussuf Dakmar, smirking in anticipation of an easy victory, took the nearest tumbler and tossed off the contents in imitation of Jeremy's free and easy air; and the drug acted as swiftly as the famous "knock-out drops" they used to administer in the New York Tenderloin.

He knew what had happened before he lost consciousness, for he tried to give the alarm to his friends. He lay on the floor opening and shutting his mouth, and I think he believed he was shouting for help; but after a minute or two you could hardly detect his breathing, and his face changed color as if he had been poisoned.

Grim didn't even trouble to get out of bed, but listened without comment to my version of Narayan Singh's report, and Jeremy went back to sleep chuckling; so I held a silent wake over Yussuf Dakmar, keeping some more of the doped whisky ready in case he should look like recovering too soon. I even searched him, finding nothing worthy of note, except that he had remarkably little money. I expect the poor devil was a penny ante villain scheming for a thousand-dollar jackpot. I felt really sorry for him and turned him over with my boot to let him breathe better.

A little before dawn I awakened Grim and Jeremy and we left the room quietly after I had scratched on the closet door with my finger-nails. Pausing outside to listen, we heard the closet door being opened stealthily from the far side. I caught Grim's eye, thinking he would smile back, but he looked as deadly serious as I have ever seen him.

"You made a bad break that time," he said when we had gone downstairs.

"Never give away information unless you're getting a return for it! If you'd left Yussuf Dakmar to scratch that door after he recovered consciousness, he'd have invented a pack of lies to tell his friends, and they'd have been no wiser than before. Now they'll know he never scratched it. They'll deduce, unless they're lunatics, that some one overheard their conference last night and knew the signal. That'll make them desperate. They'll waste no more time on finesse. They'll use violence at the first chance after the train leaves Haifa."

"Rammy's like me, he hates not to have an audience for his tricks," put in Jeremy by way of consolation.

"We've got to stage a new play, that's all," said Grim. "I'd have the lot of them arrested, but all the good that would do would be to inform the man higher up, who'd tip off another gang by wire to wait for us over the border. Say, suppose we all three bear this in mind: No play to the gallery! That's where secret service differs from other business. Applause means failure. The better the work you do, the less you can afford to admit you did it. You mustn't even smile at a man you've scored off. Half the game is to leave him guessing who it was that tripped him up. The safest course is to see that some one else gets credit for everything you do."

"Consume your own smoke, eh?" suggested Jeremy.

"That and more," Grim answered. "You've got to work like —— for what'll do you no good, because the moment it brings you recognition it destroys your usefulness. You mayn't even amuse yourself; you have to let the game amuse you, without turning one trick for the sake of an extra smile; most of the humor comes in anyhow, from knowing more than the other fellow thinks you do. The more a man lies the less you want to contradict him, because if you do he'll know that you know he's lying and that's giving away information, which is the unforgivable sin."

"Golly!" exclaimed Jeremy. "Your trade wouldn't suit me, Jim! When doing tricks, it's good to watch folks' eyes pop open. What tickles my wish-bone is what I can see for myself on their silly faces, half of 'em trying to look as if they know how it's done and the other half all grins. I did tricks for a Scotchman once who got so angry I thought he'd hit me; he said what I did was impossible, so I did it again and he still said it was impossible, and he ended by calling me a "puir dementit mon." That was my apogee; I've never reached that height since, not even when I first made a camel say prayers at Abu Kem and the Arabs hailed me as a prophet! Bread's good, but it's better with the butter on it right side up!"

"Not in this game, it isn't," answered Grim. "If your beard seems smeared with butter that's a sure sign it's dangerous. For God's sake, as long as you stay in the game with me don't play to the gallery, either of you! Let's order breakfast."

It was the longest lecture and expression of opinion I had ever listened to from James Schuyler Grim, and though I've turned it over in my mind a great deal since, I can't discover anything but widsom in it. I believe he told Jeremy and me the secret of power that morning.

CHAPTER XI

"They are all right!"

THERE was no competition for seats on the Damascus train that morning. Several of the window-panes were smashed, there were bullet-marks and splinters on the woodwork everywhere—no need to ask questions. But I found time on the platform to chat with some British officers while keeping an eye lifting for Yussuf Dakmar and his friends.

"Damascus, eh? You'll have a fine journey if you get through alive. Nine passengers were shot dead in the last train down."

"No law up there, you know. Feisul's army's all concentrated for a crack at the French (good luck to 'em! No, I'm not wishing the French any particular luck this trip.) Nobody to watch the Bedouins, so they take pot shots at every train that passes, just for the fun of it."

"May be war, you know, at any minute. The French are sure to make a drive for the railway line—you'll be hung up indefinitely—commandeered for an ambulance train—shot for the sake of argument—anything at all, in fact. They say those Algerian troops are getting out of hand—paid in depreciated francs and up against the high cost of debauchery. You're taking a chance."

"Wish I could go! Haven't seen a healthy scrap since Zeitun Ridge. Hey! Hullo! What's this? Lovely woman! Well I'll be——!"

It was Mabel Ticknor, followed by the six men I was watching for, Yussuf Dakmar looking sulky and discouraged in their midst, almost like a prisoner, and the other five wearing palpably innocent expressions.

"Lord!" remarked the officer nearest me, "that gang's got the wind up! Look at the color of their gills! Booked through, I'll bet you, and been listening to tales all night!"

The gang drew abreast just as another officer gave tongue to his opinion. They couldn't help hearing what he said; he had one of those voices that can carry on conversation in a boiler-foundry.

"There's more in this than meets the eye! She's not a nurse. She don't walk like a missionary. I heard her buy a ticket for Aleppo. Can you imagine a lone, good-looking woman going to Aleppo by that train unless she had a laissez passer from the French? She's wearing French heels. I'll bet she's carrying secret information. Look! D'you see those two Arabs in the train?" He pointed out Grim and Jeremy, who were leaning from a window. "They tipped her off to get into the compartment next ahead of them. D'you see? There she goes. She was for getting into the coach ahead. They called her back."

Almost all the other cars were empty except that one, but, whether because humans are like sheep and herd together instinctively when afraid, or because the train crew ordered it, all six compartments of the middle first class car were now occupied, with Mabel Ticknor alone in the front one. Nevertheless, Yussuf Dakmar and four of his companions started to climb in by the rear door. The sixth man lingered within earshot of the officers, presumably to pick up further suggestions.

So I got in at the front end and met them half-way down the corridor.

"Plenty of room in the car behind," I said abruptly.

They were five to one, but Yussuf Dakmar was in front, and he merely got in the way of the wolves behind him. The sixth man, who had lingered near the officers, now entered by the front end as I had done and called out that there was plenty of room in the front compartment.

"There's only a woman in here," he said in Arabic.

And he set the example by taking the seat opposite to Mabel.

It would have been easy enough to get him out again, of course. Not even the polyglot train crew would have allowed Arabs to trespass without her invitation.

The trouble was that Jeremy, Grim, Narayan Singh and I all rushed to her rescue at the same minute, which let the cat out of the bag. It was Doctor Ticknor's statement in Jerusalem about not wanting to see any of us alive again if we failed to bring his wife back safe that turned the trick and caused even Grim to lose his head for a moment. When a Sikh, two obvious Arabs and an American all rush to a woman's assistance before she calls for help, there is evidence of collusion somewhere which you could hardly expect a trained spy to overlook or fail to draw conclusions from.

It was all over in a minute. The rascal left the compartment, muttering to himself in Arabic *sotto voce*. I caught one word; but he looked so diabolically pleased with himself that it didn't really need that to stir me into action. I take twelves in boots, with a rather broad toe, and he stopped the full heft of the hardest kick I could let loose. It put him out of action for half a day, and remains one of my pleasantest memories.

His companions had to gather him up and help him pulley-hauley fashion into the car ahead, while an officious ticket-taker demanded my name and address. I found in my wallet the card of a U. S. senator and gave him that, whereat he apologized profoundly and addressed me as "colonel"—a title with which he continued to flatter me all the rest of the journey except once, when he changed it to "admiral" by mistake.

Grim went back into our compartment and laughed; and none of the essays I have read on laughter—not even the famous dissertation by Josh Billings—throw light on how to describe the tantalizing manner of it. He laughs several different ways: heartily at times, as men of my temperament mostly do, boisterously on occasion, after Jeremy's fashion; now and then cryptically, using laughter as a mask; then he owns a smile that suggests nothing more nor less than kindness based on understanding of human nature.

But that other is a devil of a laugh, mostly made of chuckles that seem to bubble off a hell-brew of disillusionment, and you get the impression that he is laughing at himself—cynically laying bare the vanity and fallibility of his own mental processes—and forecasting self-discipline.

There is no mirth in it, although there is amusement; no anger, although immeasurable scorn. I should say it's a good safe laugh to indulge in, for I think it is based on ability to see himself and his own mistakes more clearly than anybody else can, and there is no note of defeat in it. But it is full of a cruel irony that brings to mind a vision of one of those old medieval flagellant priests reviewing his sins before thrashing his own body with a wire whip.

"So that ends that," he said at last, with the gesture of a man who sweeps the pieces from a board, to set them up anew and start again. "Luckily we're not the only fools in Asia. Those six rascals know now that Mabel and we are one party."

"Pooh!" sneered Jeremy. "What can the devils do?"

"Not much this side of the border at Deraa," Grim answered. "After Deraa pretty well what they're minded. They could have us pinched on some trumped-up charge, in which case we'd be searched, Mabel included. No. We've played too long on the defensive. Deraa is the danger-point. The telegraph line is cut there, and all messages going north or south have to be carried by hand across the border. The French have an agent there who censors everything. He's the boy we've got to fool. If they appeal to him this train will go on without us.

"Ramsden, you and Narayan Singh go and sit with Mabel in her compartment. Jeremy, you go forward and bring Yussuf Dakmar back here to me; we'll let him have that fake letter just before we reach Deraa, taking care somehow to let the other five know he has it. They won't discover it's a fake until after leaving Deraa——"

"Why not?" I interrupted. "What's to prevent their opening it at once?"

"Two good reasons: for one, we'll have Narayan Singh keep a careful eye on them, and they'll keep it hidden as long as he snoops around; for another, they'll be delighted not to have to let the French agent at Deraa into the secret, because of the higher price they hope to get by holding on. They'll smuggle it over the border and not open it until they feel safe."

"Yes, but when they do look at it," said I.

"We'll be over the border, and they can't send telegrams to anywhere."

"Why not?"

"An Arab government precaution. If station-agents all along the line were allowed to send telegrams every seditious upstart would take advantage of it and they'd have more trouble than they've got now. But I warn you fellows, after Deraa—somewhere between the border and Damascus—there'll be a fight. The minute they discover that the letter is a fake they'll come for the real one like cats after a canary."

"Let 'em come!" smiled Jeremy, but Grim shook his head.

"I've been making that mistake too long," he answered. "No defensive tactics after we leave Deraa! We'll start the trouble ourselves. You watch, after Deraa the train crew will play cards in the caboose and leave Allah to care for the passengers."

"There's only one thing troubles me," said Jeremy.

"What's that?"

"Narayan Singh got Yussuf Dakmar's shirt night before last. I've had it in for Yussuf ever since we Anzacs went hungry on account of him. Any one who scuppers him has got to beat me to him. He's my meat, and I give you all notice!"

It isn't good to stand between an Anzac and the punishment he thinks an enemy deserves.

"All the same," Grim answered, smiling, "I'll bet you you don't get him, Jeremy."

"I'll bet you. How much?"

"Mind you, when the game begins, you have a free hand," Grim went on.

"All right," answered Jeremy, who loves freak bets, "if I get him you quit the army, soon as this job's done and join up with Rammy and me: if I don't I'll stay and help you on the next job."

"That's a bet," said Grim promptly.

So Jeremy went forward to play at being traitor, while Narayan Singh and I kept Mabel company. She fired questions at us right and left for twenty minutes, which we had to answer in detail instead of straining our ears to catch what Grim and Jeremy might be saying to Yussuf Dakmar in the next compartment.

Whatever they did say, they managed to prolong the interview until within ten minutes of Deraa, when the Syrian returned to his companions smiling smugly and Narayan Singh strode after him, to stand in the corridor and by ostentatiously watching them prevent their examining the letter.

Grim and Jeremy, all grins, joined us at once in Mabel's compartment.

"Did you see the devil smirk as he went off with it?" asked Jeremy. "Golly, he thinks we're fools! The theory is that we two have betrayed you, Rammy, and swapped the letter against his bare promise to pay us in Damascus. He chucked in a little blackmail about sicking his mates on to murder us if we didn't come across and I tell you we fairly love him! Lordy, here's Deraa! If they open the thing before the train leaves, Grim says the lot of us are to bolt back across the border, send Mabel home to her husband, and continue the journey by camel. That right, Grim?"

Grim nodded. It was Mabel who objected.

"I'm going to see this through," she answered. "Guess again, boys! My hair's gone gray. You owe me a real adventure now, and I won't give up the letter till you've paid!"

We had one first-class scare when the train drew up in the squalid station, where the branch line to Haifa meets the main Hedjaz Railway and the two together touch a mean town at a tangent; for a French officer in uniform boarded the train and stalked down the corridors staring hard at every one. He asked me for a passport, which was sheer bluff, so I asked him in turn for his own authority. He smiled and produced a rubber stamp, saying that if I wished to visit Beirut or Aleppo I must get a visé from him.

"*Je m'en bien garderai!*" I answered. "I'm going to see my aunt at Damascus."

"And this lady? Is she your wife?"

I laughed aloud—couldn't help it. All the Old Testament stories keep forcing themselves on your memory in that land, and the legend of Abraham trying to pass his wife off as his sister and the three-cornered drama that came of it cropped up as fresh as yesterday. There was no need that I could see to repeat the patriarch's mistake, any more than there was reasonable basis for the Frenchman's impertinence.

"Is that your business?" I asked him.

"Because," he went on, smiling meanly, "you speak with an American accent. It is against the law to carry gold across the border, and Americans have to submit to personal search, because they always carry it."

"Show me your authority!" I retorted angrily.

"Oh, as for that, there is a customs official here who has full authority. He is a Syrian. It occurred to me that you might prefer to be searched by a European."

"Call his bluff!" Grim whispered behind his sleeve, but I intended to do that anyway.

"Bring along your Syrian," said I, and off he went to do it, treating me to a backward glance over his shoulder that conveyed more than words could have done.

"He'll bluff sky-high," said Grim, "but keep on calling him."

"I've been searched at six frontiers," said Mabel. "If it's a Syrian I don't much mind; you boys all come along, and he'll behave himself. They're much worse in France and Italy. Hadn't one of you better take the letter, though? No! I was forgetting already! I won't part with it. I'll take my chance with the Syrian; he'll only ask me to empty my pockets and prove that I haven't a bag full of gold under my skirt. Sit tight all, here he comes!"

The Frenchman returned with a smiling, olive-complexioned Syrian in tow—a round-faced fellow with blue jaws as dark as his serge uniform. The Frenchman stood aside and the Syrian announced rather awkwardly that regulations compelled him to submit Mabel and me to the inconvenience of search.

"For what?" said I.

"For gold," he answered. "It is against the law to smuggle it across the border."

"I've only one gold coin," I said, showing him a U. S. twenty-dollar piece, and his yellow eyes shone at sight of it. "If it will save trouble you may have it."

I put it into his open palm with the Frenchman looking on, and it was immediately clear that that particular Syrian official was no longer amenable to international intrigue. He was bought and sold—oozy with gratitude—incapable of anything but wild enthusiasm for the U. S. A. for several hours to come.

"I have searched them!" he said to the French officer. "They have no gold, and they are all right."

The French have faults like the rest of us, but they are quicker than most men to recognize logic. The man with crimson pants and saber grinned cynically, shrugged his shoulders, and passed on to annoy somebody easier.

CHAPTER XII

"Start something before they're ready for it!"

JUST before the train started, a handsome fellow with short black beard trimmed into a point and wearing a well-cut European blue serge suit, but none-the-less obviously an Arab, came to the door of our compartment and stared steadily at Grim. He stood like a fighting man, as if every muscle of his body was under command, and the suggestion was strengthened by what might be a bullet scar over one eye.

If that fellow had asked me for a loan on the spot, or for help against his enemies, he would have received both or either. Moreover, if he had never paid me back I would still believe in him, and would bet on him again.

However, after one swift glance at him, Grim took no notice until the train was under way—not even then in fact, until the man in blue serge spoke first.

"Oh, Jimgrim!" he said suddenly in a voice like a tenor bell.

"Come in, Hadad," Grim answered, hardly glancing at him. "Make yourself at home."

He tossed a valise into the rack, and I gave up the corner seat so that he might sit facing Grim, he acknowledging the courtesy with a smile like the whicker of a sword-blade, wasting no time on foolish protest. He knew what he wanted—knew enough to take it when invited—understood me, and expected me to understand him—a first-class fellow. He sat leaning a little forward, his back not touching the cushion, with the palms of both hands resting on his knees and strong fingers motionless. He eyed Mabel Ticknor, not exactly nervously but with caution.

"Any news?" asked Grim.

"Jimgrim, the world is full of it!" he ansered in English with a laugh. "But who are these?"

"My friends."

"Your intimate friends?"

Grim nodded.

"The lady as well?"

Grim nodded again.

"That is a very strong recommendation, Jimgrim!"

Grim introduced us, giving Jeremy's name as Jmil Ras.

"Hah! I have heard of you," said Hadad, staring at him. "The Australian who wandered all over Arabia? I am probably the only Arab who knew what you really were. Do you recall that time at Wady Hafiz when a local priest denounced you and a Sheik in a yellow *kuffiyi* told the crowd that he knew you for a prophet? I am the same Sheik. I liked your pluck. I often wondered what became of you."

"Put it here!" said Jeremy, and they shook hands.

For twenty minutes after that Hadad and Jeremy swapped reminiscences in quick staccato time. It was like two Gatling guns playing a duet, and the score was about equally intelligible to any one unfamiliar with Arabia's hinterland—which is to say to all except about one person in ten million. It was most of it Greek to me, but Grim listened like an operator to the ticking of the Morse code. It was Hadad who cut it short; Jeremy would have talked all the way to Damascus.

"And so, Jimgrim, do the kites foregather? Or are we a folorn hope? Do we go to bury Feisul or to crown him king?"

"How much do you know?" Grim answered.

"Hah! More than you, my friend! I come from Europe—London—Paris—Rome. I stopped off in Deraa to listen a while, where the tide of rumor flows back and forth across the border. The English are in favor of Feisul, and would help him if they could. The French are against him and would rather have him a dead saint than a living nuisance. The most disturbing rumor I have heard was here in Deraa, to the effect that Feisul sent a letter to Jerusalem calling on all Moslems to rise and massacre the Jews. That does not sound like Feisul, but the French agent in Deraa assured me that he will have the original letter in his hands within a day or two."

Grim smiled over at Mabel.

"You might show him the letter!" he suggested.

So Mabel dug down into the mysteries beneath her shirtwaist and produced the document wrapped in a medical bandage of oiled silk. Hadad unwrapped it, read it carefully, and handed it to Grim.

"Are you deceived by that?" he asked. "Does Feisul speak like that, or write like that? Since when has he turned coward that he should sign his name with a number?"

"What do you make of it?" asked Grim.

"Hah! It is as plain as the ink on the paper. It is intended for use against Feisul, first by making the British suspicious of him, second by providing the French with an excuse to attack him, third by convicting him of treachery, for which he can be jailed or executed after he is caught. What do you propose to do with it, Jimgrim?"

"I'm going to show it to Feisul."

"Good. I, too, am on my way to see Feisul. Perhaps the two of us together can convince him what is best."

"If we two first agree," Grim answered with a dry smile.

"Do we agree that two and two make four? This is just as simple, Jimgrim. Feisul can not contend with the French. The financiers have spread their net for Syria, Feisul has no artillery worth speaking of—no gas—no masks against gas and the French have plenty of everything except money. Syria has been undermined by propaganda and corruption. Let Feisul go to British territory and thence to Europe, where his friends may have a chance to work for him. The British will give him Mesopotamia, and after that it will be up to us Arabs to prove we are a nation. That is my argument. Are we agreed?"

"If that's your plan, Hadad, I'm with you!" Grim answered.

"Then I also am with you! Let us shake hands."

"*Shwai shwai!* (Go slow!)" said Grim. "Better join up with me in Damascus. There are six men in the car ahead who'll try to murder us all presently. They've got a letter that they think is that one. The minute they find out we've fooled them there'll be ructions."

"I am good at ructions!" Hadad answered.

"My friend Narayan Singh is forward watching them," said Grim. "What they'll probably try when they make the discovery will be to have the lot of us arrested at some wayside station. I propose to forestall them."

"I am good at forestalling!" said Hadad.

"Then don't you forestall me!" laughed

Jeremy. "The fellow with a face like a pig's stern is Yussuf Dakmar, and he's my special preserve."

"I am a good Moslem. I refuse to lay hand on pig," said Hadad smiling.

We discussed Feisul and the Arab cause.

"Oh, if we had Lawrence with us!" exclaimed Hadad excitedly at last. "A little, little man—hardly any larger than Mrs. Ticknor—but a David against Goliath! And would you believe it?—there is an idiotic rumor that Lawrence has returned and is hiding in Damascus! The French are really disturbed about it. They have cabled their Foreign Office and received an official denial of the rumor; but official denials carry no weight nowadays. Out of ten Frenchmen in Syria, five believe that Lawrence is with Feisul and if they can catch him he will get short shrift. But oh Jimgrim, oh if it were true! *Wallahi!*"

Grim didn't answer, but I saw him look long at Jeremy, and then for about thirty seconds steadily at Mabel Ticknor. After that he stared out of the window for a long time, not even moving his head when a crowd of Bedouins galloped to within fifty yards of the train and volleyed at it from horseback "merely out of devilment," as Hadad hastened to assure us.

We were winding up the Lebanon Valley by that time. Carpets of flowers, green grass, waterfalls, a thatched hut to the twenty square miles, with a scattering of mean black tents between; every stone building in ruins, goats where fat kine ought to be; and a more or less modern railway screeching across the landscape, short of fuel and oil. That's Lebanon.

We grew depressed. Then silent. Our meditations were interrupted by the sudden arrival of Narayan Singh in the door of the compartment, grinning full of news.

"They have opened the letter, *sahib!* They accuse Yussuf Dakmar of deceiving them. They threaten him with death. Shall I interfere?"

"Any sign of the train crew?" Grim asked.

"Nay, they are gambling in the brake-van."

Grim looked sharply at Hadad.

"What authority have you got?"

"None. I am a personal friend of Feisul, that is all."

"Well, we'll pretend you've power to arrest them. Ramsden, you've suddenly missed your letter. You've accused Jeremy of stealing it. He has confessed to selling it to Yussuf Dakmar. Go forward in a rage and demand the letter back. Start something before they're ready for it! We'll be just behind you."

"Leave Yussuf Dakmar to me!" insisted Jeremy. "I pay the debt of an Anzac division!"

I hope I've never hurt a man who didn't deserve it, or who wasn't fit to fight; but I have to admit that Grim didn't need to repeat the invitation. I started forward in a hurry, and Jeremy elbowed Narayan Singh aside in order to follow next, Australians being notoriously unladylike performers when anybody's hat is in the ring.

By the time I reached the car ahead the train had entered a wild gorge circled by one of those astonishing hairpin curves with which engineers defeat nature. The panting engine slowed almost to a snail's pace, having only a scant fuel ration with which to negotiate curve and grade combined. To our right there was a nearly sheer drop of four hundred feet, with a stream at the bottom boiling among limestone boulders.

But there was no time to study scenery. From the middle compartment of the car there came yells for help and the peculiar noise of thump and scuffle that can't be mistaken. Men fight in various ways, Lord knows, and the worst are the said-to-be civilized; but from Nome to Cape Town and all the way from China to Peru the veriest tenderfoot can tell in the dark the difference between fight and horseplay.

I reached the door of the compartment in time to see three of them (two bleeding from knife-wounds in the face) force Yussuf Dakmar backward toward the window, the whole lot stabbing frantically as they milled and swayed. The fifth man was holding on to the scrimmage with his left hand and reaching round with his right trying to stick a knife into Yussuf Dakmar's ribs without endangering his own hide.

But the sixth man was the rascal I had kicked. He had no room—perhaps no inclination—to get into the scrimmage; so he saw me first, and he needed no spur to his enmity. With a movement as quick as a cat's and presence of mind that accounted for his being leader of the gang, he seized the fifth man by the neck and spun him round to call his attention; and the two came for me together like devils out of a spring trap.

Now the narrow door of a compartment on a train isn't any kind of easy place to fight in, but I vow and declare that Jeremy and I both did our best for Yussuf Dakmar. That's a remarkable thing if you come to think of it. As a dirty murderer—thief—liar—traitor—spy, he hadn't much claim on our affections and Jeremy cherished a war-grudge against him on top of it all. What is it that makes us side with the bottom dog regardless of pros and cons?

It was a nasty mix-up, because they used knives and we relied on hands and fists. I've used a pick-handle on occasion and a gun when I've had to, but speaking generally it seems to me to demean a white man to use weapons in a row like that, and I find that most fellows who have walked the earth much agree with me.

We tried to go in like a typhoon, shock-troop style, but it didn't work. Another man let go of Yussuf Dakmar, who was growing weak and too short of wind to yell and in a moment there were five of us struggling on the floor between the seats, one man under me with my forearm across his throat and another alongside me, stabbing savagely at a leather valise under the impression that he was carving up my ribs. On top of that mess Narayan Singh pounced like a tiger, wrenching at arms and legs until I struggled to my feet again—only to be thrust aside by Jeremy as he rose and rushed at Yussuf Dakmar's two assailants.

But with all his speed Jeremy was a tenth of a tick too late. The wretch was already helpless, and I dare say they broke his back as they leaned their combined weight on him and forced him backward and head-first through the window. Jeremy made a grab for his foot, but missed it, and a knife-blade already wet with Yussuf Dakmar's blood whipped out and stung him in the thigh. That of course, was sheer ignorance. You never should sting an Australian. Kill him or let him alone. Better yet, make friends with him or surrender; but above all, do nothing by halves. They're a race of whole-hoggers, equally ready to force their only shirt on you or fight you to a finish.

So Jeremy finished the business at the window. He took a neck in each hand and cracked their skulls together until the *whack-whack-whack* of it was like the exhaust of a Ford with loose piston rings; and when they fell from his grip unconscious he came to my rescue. Believe me, I needed it.

They were as strong and lithe as wildcats, those Syrians, and fully awake to the advantage that the narrow door gave them. One man struggled with Narayan Singh and kept him busy with his bulk so wedged across the opening that Grim and Hadad were as good as demobilized out in the corridor; and the other two tackled me like a pair of butchers hacking at a maddened bull. I landed with my fists but each time at the cost of a flesh-wound; and though I got one knife-hand by the wrist and hung on, wrenching and screwing to throw the fellow off his feet, the other man's right was free and the eighteen-inch Erzeram dagger that he held danced this and that way for an opening underneath my guard.

Jeremy's left fist landed under the peak of his jaw exactly at the moment when he stiffened to launch his thrust. He fell as if pole-axed and the blade missed my stomach by six inches, but the combined force of thrust and blow was great enough to drive the weapon into the wooden partition, where it stayed until I pulled it out to keep it as a souvenir.

THERE wasn't much trouble after that. Grim and Hadad came in and we tore strips from the Syrians' clothing to tie their hands and feet with. Hadad went to the rear of the train, climbing along the foot-board of the third-class cars to the caboose to throw some sort of bluff to the conductor, who came forward—called me "Colonel" and Hadad "Excellency"—looked our prisoners over—recognized no friends—and said that everything was "quite all right." He said he knew exactly what to do; but we left Narayan Singh on watch, lest that knowledge should prove too original which, however, it turned out not to be. It was bromidian—as old as history. Narayan Singh came back and told us.

"Lo, *sahib;* he went through their clothes as an ape for fleas, I watching. And when he had all their valuables he laid them on the foot-board, and then, as we passed some Bedouin tents, he kicked them off. But he seems an honest fellow, for he gave them back some small change to buy food with, should any be obtainable."

After that he stood flashing his white teeth for half an hour watching Mabel bandage Jeremy and me, for it always amuses a Sikh to watch a white man eat punishment. Sikhs are a fine race—but curious—distinctly curious and given to unusual amusement. When Mabel had finished with me at last I stuck a needle into him, and he laughed accepting the stab as a compliment.

A strange thing is how men settle down after excitement. Birds do the same thing. a hawk swoops down a hedgerow; there is a great flutter, followed by sudden silence. A minute later the chattering begins again, without any reference to one of their number being torn in the plunderer's beak. And so we; even Grim loosened up and gossiped about Feisul and the already ancient days when Feisul was the up-to-date Saladin leading Arab hosts to victory.

But there was an even stranger circumstance than that. We weren't the only people in the train; our car for instance, was fairly well occupied by Armenians, Arabs, and folk whose vague nationality came under the general head of Levantine. The car ahead where the fight took place, though not crowded wasn't vacant, and there were others in the car behind. Yet not one of them from first to last made a move to interfere. They minded their own business, which proves, I think, that manners are based mainly on discretion.

As the train gasped slowly up the grade and rolled bumpily at last along the fertile, neglected Syrian highland, all the Armenians on the train removed their hats and substituted the red tarboosh, preferring the headgear of a convert rather than be the target of every Bedouin with a rifle in his hand.

The whole journey was a mix-up of things to wonder at—not least of them the matter-of-fact confidence with which the train proceeded along a single track, whose condition left you wondering at each bump whether the next wouldn't be the journey's violent end. There were lamps, but no oil for light when evening came. Once, when we bumped over a shaky culvert and a bushel or two of coal dust fell from the rusty tender, the engineer stopped the train and his assistant went back with a shovel and piece of sacking to gather up the precious stuff.

There was nothing but squalid villages and ruins, goats and an occasional rare camel to be seen through the window—not a tree anywhere, the German General Staff having attended to that job thoroughly. There is honey in the country and it's plentiful as well as good, because bees are not easy property to raid and make away with; but the milk is from goats, and as for overflowing, I would hate to have to punish the dugs of a score of the brutes to get a jugful for dinner. Syria's wealth is of the past and the future.

Long before it grew too dark to watch the landscape we were wholly converted to Grim's argument that Syria was no place for a man of Feisul's caliber. The Arab owners of the land are plundered to the bone; the men with money are foreigners, whose only care is for a government that will favor this religion and that breed. To set up a kingdom there would be like preaching a new religion in Hester Street; you could hand out text, soup and blankets, but you'd need a whale's supply of faith to carry on and the offertories wouldn't begin to meet expenses.

Until that journey finally convinced me, I had been wondering all the while in the back of my head whether Grim wasn't intending an impertinence. It hasn't been my province hitherto to give advice to kings; for one thing, they haven't asked me for it. If I were asked, I think I'd take the problem pretty seriously and hesitate before suggesting to a man on whom the hope of fifty million people rests that he'd better pull up stakes and eat crow in exile for the present. I'd naturally hate to be a king, but if I were one I don't think quitting would look good, and I think I'd feel like kicking the fellow who suggested it.

But the view from the train, and Grim's talk with Hadad put me in a mood in which Syria didn't seem good enough for a soap-box politician, let alone a man of Feisul's fame and character. And when at last a few lights in a cluster down the track proclaimed that we were drawing near Damascus, I was ready to advise everybody, Feisul included, to get out in a hurry while a chance remained.

CHAPTER XIII

"Bismillah! What a mercy that I met you!"

WHILE the fireman scraped the iron floor for his last two shovelfuls of coal-dust and the train wheezed wearily into the dark station Grim began to busy himself in mysterious ways. Part of his own costume consisted of a short, curved simitar attached to an embroidered belt—the sort of thing that Arabs wear for ornament rather than use. He took it off and, groping in the dark, helped Mabel put it on, without a word of explanation.

Then, instead of putting on his own Moslem over-cloak he threw that over her shoulders and digging down into his bag for a spare headdress, snatched her hat off and bound on the white kerchief in its place with the usual double, gold-covered cord of camel-hair.

Then came my friend the train conductor and addressed me as "Colonel," offering to carry out the bags. The moment he had grabbed his load and gone Grim broke silence:

"Call her Colonel and me Grim. Don't forget now!"

We became aware of faces under helmets peering through the window—officers of Feisul's army on the watch for unwelcome visitors. From behind them came the conductor's voice again, airing his English—

"Any more bags inside there, Colonel?"

"Get out quick, Jeremy, and make a fuss about the Colonel coming!" ordered Grim.

Jeremy suddenly became the arch-efficient servitor, establishing importance for his chief, and never a new-made millionaire or modern demagog had such skilful advertisement. The Shereefian officers stood back at a respectful distance, ready to salute when the personage should deign to alight.

"What shall be done with the *memsahib's* hat?" demanded Narayan Singh.

You could only see the whites of his eyes, but he shook something in his right hand.

"Eat it!" Grim answered.

"Heavens! That's my best hat!" objected Mabel. "Give it here. I'll carry it under the cloak."

"Get rid of it!" Grim ordered; and Narayan Singh strode off to contribute yellow Leghorn straw and poppies to the engine furnace.

I gave him ten piastres to fee the engineer and five for the fireman, so you might say that was high-priced fuel.

"What kind of bunk are you throwing this time?" I asked Grim.

He didn't answer, but gave orders to Mabel in short, crisp syllables.

"You're Colonel Lawrence. Answer no questions. If any one salutes, just move your hand and bow your head a bit. You're just his height. Look straight in front of you and take long strides. Bend your head forward a little; there, that's it."

"I'm scared!" announced Mabel, by way of asking for more particulars.

She wasn't scared in the least.

"Piffle!" Grim answered. "Remember you're Lawrence, that's all. They'd give you Damascus if you asked for it. Follow Jeremy, and leave the rest to us."

I don't doubt that Grim had been turning over the whole plan in his mind for hours past, but when I taxed him with it afterward his reply was characteristic:

"If we'd rehearsed it, Mabel and Hadad would both have been self-conscious. The game is to study your man—or woman, as the case may be—and sometimes drill 'em, sometimes spring it on 'em, according to circumstances. The only rule is to study people; there are no two quite alike."

Hadad was surprized into silence, too thoughtful a man to do anything except hold his tongue until the next move should throw more light on the situation. He followed us out of the car, saying nothing; and being recognized by the light of one dim lantern as an intimate friend of Feisul, he accomplished all that Grim could have asked of him.

He was known to have been in Europe until recently. Rumors about Lawrence had been tossed from mouth to mouth for days past and here was somebody who looked like Lawrence in the dark, followed by Grim and Hadad and addressed as "Colonel." Why shouldn't those three Shereefian officers jump to conclusions, salute like automatons and grin like loyal men who have surprized a secret and won't tell any one but their bosom friends? It was all over Damascus within the hour that Lawrence had come from England to stand by Feisul in the last ditch. The secret was kept perfectly!

We let Mabel walk ahead of us, and there was no trouble at the customs barrier, where normally every piastre that could be wrung from protesting passengers was mulcted to support a starving treasury; for the officers strode behind us, and made signs to the customs clerk, who immediately swore at every one in sight and sent all his minions to yell for the best cabs in Damascus.

Narayan Singh distributed largesse to about a hundred touts and hangers-on and we splashed off toward the hotel in two open landaus, through streets six inches deep in water except at the cross-gutters, where the horses jumped for fear of losing soundings.

Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, were in flood as usual at that time of year, and the scavenging street curs had to swim from one garbage heap to the next. There was a gorgeous battle going on opposite the hotel door, where half-a-dozen white-ivoried mongrels with their backs to a heap of kitchen leavings held a ford against a dozen others, each beast that made good his passage joining with the defenders to fight off the rest. I stood on the hotel steps and watched the war for several minutes, while Grim went in with the others and registered as "Rupert Ramsden of Chicago, U. S. A., and party."

The flood, and darkness owing to the lack of fuel, were all in our favor, for such folk as were abroad were hardly of the sort whose gossip would carry weight; nevertheless, we hadn't been in the hotel twenty minutes before an agent of the bank put in his appearance, speaking French volubly. Seeing my name on the register, he made the mistake of confining his attention to me, which enabled Grim to get Mabel safely away into a big room on the second floor.

The Frenchman (if he was one—he had a Hebrew nose) made bold to corner me on a seat near the dining-room door. He was nervous rather than affable—a little pompous, as behooved the representative of money power—and evidently used to having his impertinences answered humbly.

"You are from the South? Did you have a good journey? Was the train attacked? Did you hear any interesting rumors on the way?"

Those were all preliminary questions, thrown out at random to break ice. As he sat down beside me you could feel the next one coming just as easily as see that he wasn't interested in the answers to the first.

"You are here on business? What business?"

"Private business," said I, with an eye on Jeremy just coming down the stairs. "You talk Arabic?"

He nodded, eyeing me keenly.

"That man is my servant and knows my affairs. I'm too tired to talk after the journey. Suppose you ask him."

So Jeremy came and sat beside us, and threw the cow's husband around as blithely as he juggles billiard balls. I wasn't supposed to understand what he was saying.

"The big *effendi* is a prizefighter, who has heard there is money to be made at Feisul's court. At least, that is what he says. Between you and me, I think he is a spy for the French Government, because when he engaged me in Jerusalem he gave me a fist-full of paper francs with which to send a telegram to Paris. What was in the telegram? I don't know; it was a mass of figures, and I mixed them up on purpose, being an honest fellow averse to spy's work. Oh, I've kept an eye on him, believe me! Ever since he killed a Syrian in the train I've had my doubts of him. *Mashallah,* what a murderous disposition the fellow has! Kill a man as soon as look at him—indeed he would. Are you a prince in these parts?"

"A banker."

"*Bismillah!* What a mercy that I met you. I overheard him say that he will visit the bank tomorrow morning to cash a draft for fifty thousand francs. I'd examine the draft carefully if I were you. It wouldn't surprize me to learn it was stolen or forged. Is there any other bank that he could go to?"

"No, only mine; the others have suspended business on account of the crisis."

"Then, in the name of Allah don't forget me! You ought to give me a thousand francs for the information. I am a poor man but honest. At what time shall I come for the money in the morning? Perhaps you could give me a little on account at once, for my wages are due tonight and I'm not at all certain of getting them."

"Well; see me in the morning," said the banker.

He got up and left us at once, hardly troubling to excuse himself; and Grim heard him tell the hotel proprietor that our whole party would be locked up in jail before midnight. That rumor went the rounds like wild-fire, so that we were given a wide berth and had a table all to ourselves in the darkest corner of the big, dim dining-room.

There were more than a hundred people eating dinner, and Narayan Singh, Hadad and I were the only ones in western clothes. Every seat at the other tables was occupied by some Syrian dignitary in flowing robes—rows and rows of stately-looking notables, scant of speech and noisy at their food. Many of them seemed hardly to know the use of knife and fork, but they could all look as dignified as owls, even when crowding in spaghetti with their fingers.

We provided them with a sensation before the second course was finished. A fine-looking Syrian officer in khaki, with the usual cloth flap behind his helmet that forms a compromise between western smartness and eastern comfort, strode into the room and bore down on us. He invited us out into the corridor with an air that suggested we would better not refuse, and we filed out after him in an atmosphere of frigid disapproval.

Mabel was honestly scared half out of her wits now. Not even the smiles of the hotel proprietor in the doorway reassured her, nor his deep bow as she passed. She was even more scared, if that were possible, when two officers, obviously of high rank, came forward in the hall to greet her, and one addressed her in Arabic as Colonel Lawrence. Luckily one oil lamp per wall was doing duty in place of electric light, or there might have been an awkward incident. She had presence of mind enough to disguise her alarm by a fit of coughing, bending nearly double and covering the lower part of her face with the ends of the headdress folded over.

The officers had no time to waste and gave their message to Grim instead.

"The Emir Feisul is astonished, Jimgrim, that Colonel Lawrence and you should visit Damascus without claiming his hospitality. We have two autos waiting to take you to the palace."

Well; the luggage didn't amount to much; Narayan Singh brought that down in a jiffy; and when I went to settle with the hotel-keeper one of the Syrian officers interfered.

"These are guests of the Emir Feisul," he announced. "Send the bill to me."

We were piled into the waiting autos. Mabel, Grim and I rode in the first one, with the Syrian officers up beside the driver; Jeremy, Narayan Singh and Hadad followed; and we went through the dark streets like sea-monsters splashing over shoals, unseen I think—certainly unrecognized.

The streets were almost deserted and I didn't catch sight of one armed man, which was a thing to marvel at when you consider that fifty thousand or so were supposed to be concentrated in the neighborhood, with conscription working full-blast and the foreign consuls solely occupied in procuring exemption for their nationals.

It wasn't my first visit to a reigning prince, for if you travel much in India you're bound to come in contact with numbers of them; so I naturally formed a mental picture of what was in store for us, made up from a mixture of memories of Gwalior, Baroda, Bikanir, Hyderabad, Poona and Bagdad of the Arabian Nights. It just as naturally vanished in presence of the quiet, latter-day dignity of the real thing.

THE palace turned out to be a villa on the outskirts of the city, no bigger and hardly more pretentious than a well-to-do commuter's place at Bronxville or Mount Vernon. There was a short semicircular drive in front, with one sentry and one small lantern burning at each gate; but their khaki uniforms and puttees didn't disguise the fact that the sentries were dark, dyed-in-the-wool Arabs from the desert country, and though they presented arms, they did it as men who make concessions without pretending to admire such foolishness. I wouldn't have given ten cents for an unescorted stranger's chance of getting by them, whatever his nationality.

Surely there was never less formality in a king's house since the world began. We were ushered straight into a narrow, rather ordinary hall, and through that into a sitting-room about twenty feet square. The light was from oil lamps hanging by brass chains from the curved beams; but the only other Oriental suggestions were the cushioned seats in each corner, small octagonal tables inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and a mighty good Persian carpet.

Narayan Singh and Jeremy, supposedly being servants, offered to stay in the hall, but were told that Feisul wouldn't approve of that.

"Whatever they shouldn't hear can be said in another room," was the explanation.

So we all sat down together on one of the corner seats, and were kept waiting about sixty seconds until Feisul entered by a door in the far corner. And when he came he took your breath away.

It always prejudices me against a man to be told that he is dignified and stately. Those adjectives smack of too much self-esteem and of a claim to be made of different clay from most of us. He was both, yet he wasn't either. And he didn't look like a priest, although if ever integrity and righteousness shone from a man, with their effect heightened by the severely simple Arab robes, I swear that man was he.

Just about Jeremy's height and build—rather tall and thin that is—with a slight stoop forward from the shoulders due to thoughtfulness and camel-riding and a genuine intention not to hold his head too high, he looked like a shepherd in a Bible picture, only with good humor added, that brought him forward out of a world of dreams on to the same plane with you, face to face—understanding meeting understanding—man to man.

I wish I could describe his smile as he entered, believing he was coming to meet Lawrence, but it can't be done. Maybe you can imagine it if you bear in mind that this man was captain of a cause as good as lost, hedged about by treason and well aware of it; and that Colonel Lawrence was the one man in the world who had proved himself capable of bridging the division between East and West and making possible the Arab dream of independence.

But unhappily it's easier to record unpleasant things. He knew at the first glance—even before she drew back the *kuffiyi*—that Mabel wasn't Lawrence, and I've never seen a man more disappointed in all my wanderings. The smile didn't vanish; he had too much pluck and self-control for that; but you might say that iron entered into it, as if for a second he was mocking destiny, willing to face all odds alone since he couldn't have his friend.

And he threw off disappointment like a man—dismissed it as a rock sheds water, coming forward briskly to shake hands with Grim and bowing as Grim introduced us.

"At least here are two good friends," he said in Arabic, sitting down between Grim and Hadad. "Tell me what this means, and why you deceived us about Lawrence."

"We've something to show you," Grim answered. "Mrs. Ticknor brought it; otherwise it might have been seen by the wrong people."

Feisul took the hint and dismissed the Syrian officers, calling them by their first names as he gave them "leave to go." Then Mabel produced the letter and Feisul read it, crossing one thin leg over the other and leaning back easily. But he sat forward again and laughed bitterly when he had read it twice over.

"I didn't write this. I never saw it before, or heard of it," he said simply.

"I know that," said Grim. "But we thought you'd better look at it."

Feisul laid the letter across his knee and paused to light a cigaret. I thought he was going to do what nine men out of ten in a tight place would certainly have done; but he blew out the match, and went on smoking.

"You mean your government has seen the thing, and sent you to confront me with it?"

It was Grim's turn to laugh, and he was jubilant, without a trace of bitterness.

"No. The chief and I have risked our jobs by not reporting it. This visit is strictly unofficial."

Feisul handed the letter back to him, and it was Grim who struck a match and burned it, after tearing off the seal for a memento.

"You know what it means, of course?" Grim trod the ash into the carpet. "If the French could have come by that letter in Jerusalem, they'd have Dreyfussed you—put you on trial for your life on trumped-up evidence. They'd send a sworn copy of it to the British to keep them from taking your part."

"I am grateful to you for burning it," Feisul answered.

He didn't look helpless, hopeless, or bewildered, but dumb and clinging on, like a man who holds an insecure footing against a hurricane.

"It means that the men all about you are traitors," Grim went on.

"Not all of them," Feisul interrupted.

"But many of them," answered Grim. "Your Arabs are loyal hot-heads; some of your Syrians are dogs whom any one can hire."

It was straight speaking. From a major in foreign service, uninvited, to a king, it sounded near the knuckle. Feisul took it quite pleasantly.

"I know one from the other, Jimgrim."

Grim got up and took a chair opposite Feisul. He was all worked up and sweating at self-mastery, hotter under the collar than I had ever seen him.

"It means," he went on, with a hand on each knee and his strange eyes fixed steadily on Feisul's, "that the French are ready to attack you. It means they're sure of capturing your person—and bent on seeing your finish. They'll give you a drum-head court martial and make excuses afterward."

"*Inshallah,*" Feisul answered, meaning "if Allah permits it."

"That is exactly the right word!" Grim exploded; and Lord, he was hard put to it to keep excitement within bounds.

I could see his neck trembling, and there were little beads of sweat on his temple. It was Grim at last without the mask on.

"Allah marks the destiny of all of us. Do you suppose we're here for nothing—at this time?"

Feisul smiled.

"I am glad to see you," he said simply.

"Are you planning to fight the French?" Grim asked him suddenly, in the sort of way that a man at close quarters lets rip an upper-cut.

"I must fight or yield. They have sent an ultimatum, but delayed it so as not to permit me time to answer. It has expired already. They are probably advancing."

"And you intend to sit here and wait for them?"

"I shall be at the front."

"You know you haven't a chance!"

"My advisers think that my presence at the front will encourage our men sufficiently to win the day."

"Have you a charm against mustard gas?"

"That is our weakness. No, we have no masks."

"And the wind setting up from the sea at this time of year! Your army is going straight into a trap, and you along with it. Half of the men who advise you to go to the front will fight like lions against a net, and the other half will sell you to the French! Your fifty thousand men will melt like butter in the sun and your Arab cause will be left without a leader!"

Feisul pondered that for about a minute, leaning back and watching Grim's face.

"We held a council of war, Jimgrim," he said at last. "It was the unanimous opinion of the staff that we ought to fight and the cabinet upheld them. I couldn't cancel the order if I wished. What would you think of a king who left his army in the lurch?"

"Nobody will ever accuse you of cowardice," Grim answered. "You're a proven brave man if ever there was one. The point is, do you want all your bravery and hard work for the Arab cause to go for nothing? Do you want the prospect of Arab independence to go up in smoke on a gas-swept battle-field?"

"It would break my heart," said Feisul, "although one heart hardly matters."

"It would break more hearts than yours," Grim retorted. "There are millions looking to you for leadership. Leave me out of it. Leave Lawrence out of it, and all the other non-Moslems who have done their bit for you. Leave most of these Syrians out of it; for they're simply politicians making use of you—a mess of breeds and creeds so mixed and corrupted that they don't know which end up they stand! If the Syrians had guts they'd have rallied so hard to you long ago that no outsider would have had a chance."

"What do you mean? What are you proposing?" Feisul asked quietly.

"Bagdad is your place, not Damascus!"

"But here I am in Damascus," Feisul retorted; and for the first time there was a note of impatience in his voice. "I came here at the request of the Allies, on the strength of their promises. I did not ask to be king. I would rather not be. Let any man be ruler whom the Arabs choose, and I will work for him loyally. But the Arabs chose me and the Allies consented. It was only after they had won their war with our help that the French began raising objections and the British deserted me. It is too late to talk of Bagdad now."

"It isn't! It's too soon!" Grim answered, bringing down a clenched fist on his knee, and Feisul laughed in spite of himself.

"You talk like a prophet, Jimgrim, but let me tell you something. It is mainly a question of money after all. The British paid us a subsidy until they withdrew from Syria. They did their best for us even then, for they left behind guns, ammunition, wagons and supplies. When the French seized the ports they promised to continue the subsidy, because they are collecting the customs dues and we have no other revenue worth mentioning. But rather than send us money the French have told our people not to pay taxes; so our treasury is empty. Nevertheless, we contrived by one means and another. We arranged a bank credit, and ordered supplies from abroad. The supplies have reached Beirut, but the French have ordered the bank to cancel the credit, and until we pay for the supplies they are withheld."

"Any gas masks among the supplies you ordered?" Grim asked him; and Feisul nodded.

"That banker has played fast and loose with us until the last minute. Relying on our undertaking not to molest foreigners he has resided in Damascus, making promises one day and breaking them the next, keeping his funds in Beirut and his agency here, draining money out of the country all the while."

"Why didn't you arrest him?"

"We gave our word to the French that he should have complete protection and immunity. It seemed a good thing to us to have such an influential banker here; he has international connections. As recently as yesterday, twenty minutes before that ultimatum came, he was in this room assuring me that he would be able to solve the credit difficulty within a day or two."

"Would you like to send for him now?" suggested Grim.

"I doubt if he would come."

"Well, have him fetched!"

Feisul shook his head.

"If other people break their promises, that is no reason why we should break ours. If we can defeat the French and force them to make other terms, then we will expel him from Syria. I leave at midnight, Jimgrim."

"To defeat the French? You go to your Waterloo! You're in check with only one move possible, and I'm here to make you realize it. You're a man after my own heart, Feisul, but you and your Arabs are children at dealing with these foregin exploiters!

"They can beat you at every game but honesty. And listen: If you did defeat the French—if you drove them into the sea tomorrow, they'd get away with all the money in Beirut and you'd still be at the mercy of foreign capitalists! Instead of an independent Arab kingdom here you'd have a mixture of peoples and religions all plotting against one another and you, with capitulations and foreign consuls getting in the way, and bond-holding bankers sitting on top of it all like the Old Man of the Sea in the story of Sindbad the Sailor!

"Leave that to the French! Let them have all Syria to stew in! Go to England where your friends are. Let the politicians alone. Meet real folk and talk with them. Tell them the truth; for they don't know it! Talk with the men and women who haven't got political jobs to lose—with the fellows who did the fighting—with the men and women who have votes. They'll believe you. They've given up believing politicians, and they're learning how to twist the politicians' tails. You'll find yourself in Bagdad within a year or two, with all Mesopotamia to make a garden of and none but Arabs to deal with. That's your field!"

Feisul smiled with the air of a man who recognizes but is unconvinced.

"There are always things that might have been," he answered. "As it is, I can not desert the army."

"We'll save what we can of the army," Grim answered. "Your Syrians will save their own skins; it's only the Arabs we've got to look out for—a line of retreat for the Arab regiments, and another one for you. It's not too late, and you know I'm right! Come on; let's get busy and do it!"

Feisul's smile was all affection and approval, but he shook his head.

"If what you say is true, I should only have the same problem in Mesopotamia—foreign financiers," he answered.

"That's exactly where you're wrong!" Grim retorted triumphantly.

He stood up, and pointed at Jeremy.

"Here's a man who owns a gold-mine. It lies between Mesopotamia and your father's kingdom of the Hedjaz and its exact whereabouts is a secret. He's here tonight to make you a present of the mine! And here's another man"—he pointed at me—"a mining expert, who'll tell you what the thing's worth. It's yours, if you'll agree to abandon Syria and lay a course for Bagdad!"

CHAPTER XIV

"You'll be a virgin victim!"

FEISUL was interested; he couldn't help be. And he was utterly convinced of Grim's sincerity. But he wasn't moved from his purpose, and not even Jeremy's account of the gold mine, or my professional opinion of its value had the least effect toward cancelling the plans he had in mind. He was deeply affected by the offer, but that was all.

"Good ——, man!" Grim exploded suddenly. "Surely you won't throw the whole world into war again! You know what it will mean, if the French kill or imprison you. There isn't a Moslem of all the millions in Asia who won't swear vengeance against the West—you know that! A direct descendant of Mohammed, and the first outstanding, conquering Moslem since Saladin——"

"The Allies should have thought of that before they broke promises," said Feisul.

"Never mind them. —— them!" answered Grim. "It's up to you! The future of civilization is in your lap this minute!

Can't you see that if you lose you'll be a martyr, and Islam will rise to avenge you?"

"*Inshallah*," said Feisul, nodding.

"But that if you let pride go by the board, and seem to run away, there'll be a breathing spell? Asia would wonder for a few months, and do nothing, until it began to dawn on them that you had acted wisely and had a better plan in view."

"I am not proud, except of my nation," Feisul answered. "I would not let pride interfere with policy. But it is too late to talk of this."

"Which is better?" Grim demanded. "A martyr, the very mention of whose name means war, or a living power for peace under a temporary cloud?"

"I am afraid I am a poor host. Forgive me," Feisul answered. "Dinner has been waiting all this while, and you have a lady with you. This is disgraceful."

He rose and led the way into another room, closing the discussion. We ate an ordinary meal in an ordinary dining-room, Feisul presiding and talking trivialities with Mabel and Hadad. There was an occasional boisterous interlude by Jeremy, but even he with his tales of unknown Arabia couldn't lift the load of depression. Grim and I sat silent through the meal. I experienced the sensation that you get when an expedition proves a failure and you've got to go home again with nothing done—all dreary emptiness; but Grim was hatching something, as you could tell by the far-away expression and the glowering light in his eyes. He looked about ready for murder.

Narayan Singh's face all through the meal was a picture—delight and pride at dining with a king, amazement at his *karma* that had brought a *sepoy* of the line to hear such confidences first hand, chagrin over Grim's apparent failure and desire to be inconspicuous controlled his expression in turn. Once or twice he tried to make conversation with me, but I was in no mood for it, being a grouchy old bear on occasion without decent manners.

Feisul excused himself the minute the meal was over, saying he had a conference to attend, and we all went back into the sitting-room, where Grim took the chair he had occupied before and marshalled us into a row on the seat in front of him. He was back again in form—electric—and selfcontrolled.

"Have you folk got the hang of this?" he asked. "Do you realize what it means if Feisul goes out and gets scuppered?"

We thought we did, even if we didn't. I don't suppose any one except the few who, like Grim, have made a life-study of the problem of Islam in all its bearings could quite have grasped it. Mabel had a viewpoint that served Grim's purpose as well as any at the moment.

"That man's too good, and much too good-looking to be wasted!" she said emphatically. "D'you suppose that if Colonel Lawrence were really here—"

"Half a minute," said Grim, "and I'll come to that. How about you, Hadad? How far would you go to save Feisul from this Waterloo?"

"I would go a long way," he answered cautiously. "What do you intend?"

"To appear near the firing-line, for one thing, with somebody who looks like Colonel Lawrence, and somebody else who looks enough like Feisul in one of Feisul's cars, and give the French a run for it in one direction while Feisul escapes in the other."

"*Wallahi!* But what if Feisul won't go?"

"He'll get helped! Did you ever hear what they did to Napoleon at Waterloo? Seized his bridle and galloped away with him."

"You mean I'm to act Lawrence again?" asked Mabel, looking deathly white.

Grim nodded.

"Who's cast for Feisul?" Jeremy inquired.

"You are! You're the only trained stage-actor in the bunch. You're his height—not unlike his figure——"

"I resemble him as much as a kangaroo looks like an ostrich!' laughed Jeremy. "You're talking wild, Jim. What have you had to drink?"

"How about you, Ramsden? Will you see this through?"

Jeremy shook his head at me. I believe he thought for the moment that Grim had gone mad. He hadn't the experience of Grim that I had, and consequently not the same confidence in Grim's ability to dream, catch the essence of the dream, pin it down and make a fact of it.

"I'll go the limit," said I.

"Well, I'll be ——!" laughed Jeremy. "All right; same here. I stake a gold mine and Rammy raises me. Fetch your crown and sceptre and I'll play king to Jim's ace in a royal straight flush. Mabel's queen. Hadad's a knave. He looks it! Keep smiling, Hadad, old top and I'll let you forgive me. Rammy's the ten-spot—*ten*tative—*ten*acious—ten aces up his sleeve—and packs a ten-ton wallop when you get him going. What's Narayan Singh? The deuce?"

"The joker," answered Grim. "Are you in on this?"

"*Sahib,* there was no need to ask. What your honor finds good enough—your honor's order——"

"Orders have nothing to do with it. We're not in British territory. This is unofficial. I've no right to give you orders," said Grim. "You're free to refuse. I'm likely to lose my job over this and so are you if you take part in it."

Narayan Singh grinned hugely.

"Hah! A *sepoy's* position is a smaller stake than a major's commission or a gold mine, but I likewise have a life to lose, and I play too!"

Grim nodded curtly. It was no time for returning compliments.

"How about you, Mabel? We *can* manage this without you, and you've a husband to think of——"

"If he were here he'd hate it, but he'd give permission."

"All right. Now Hadad. What about it?"

"Am I to obey you absolutely, not knowing what the——"

Grim interrupted him:

"The proposal's fair. Either you withdraw now and hold your tongue, or come in with us. If you're in I'll tell the details; if not there's no need."

"*Wallahi!* What a sword-blade you are, Jimgrim! If I say yes, I risk my future on your backgammon board; if I say no, my life is worth a millieme, for you will tell that Sikh you call the "joker" to attend to me!"

"Not so," Grim answered. "If you don't like the plan, I'll trust you to fall out and keep the secret."

"Oh, in that case," answered Hadad, hesitating. "Since you put it that way—well—it is lose all or perhaps win something—half-measures are no good—the alternative is ruin of the Arab cause—it is a forlorn hope—well, one throw of the dice, eh?—and all our fortunes on the table!—one little mistake and *Hêlas*—Finish! Never mind. Yes, I will play too. I will play this to the end with you."

"So we're all set," remarked Grim with a sigh of relief.

Instantly he threw his shoulders back and began to set his pieces for the game. And you know, there's a world of difference between the captain of a side who doesn't worry until the game begins and Grim's sort, who do their worrying beforehand and then play, and make the whole side play for every ounce that's in them.

"Mabel, you're Lawrence. Keep silent, be shy, avoid encounters—act like a man who's not supposed to be here, but who came to help Feisul contrary to express commands laid on him by the Foreign Office. Get that? Lawrence is a shy man anyway—hates publicity, rank, anything that calls attention to himself. The more shy you are, the easier you'll get away with it. Feisul must help pretend you're Lawrence. The presence of Lawrence would add to his prestige incalculably, and I think he'll see that, but if not never mind, we'll manage. Any questions? Quick!"

You can't ask questions when you're given that sort of opportunity. The right ones don't occur to you and the others seem absurd. Grim knew that, of course, but when you're dealing with a woman there's just one chance in a hundred that she may think of something vital that hasn't occurred to anybody else. Most women aren't practical; but it's the impractical things that happen.

"Suppose we're captured by the French?" she suggested.

"That's what's going to happen," he answered. "When they've got you, then you're Mrs. Mabel Ticknor, who never saw Lawrence and wouldn't recognize him if you did."

"They'll ask why I'm wearing man's clothes, and masquerading as an Arab."

"Well, you're a woman, aren't you? You answer with another question—ask them just how safe a woman would be! They may claim that their Algerians are baby-lambs, but they can't blame you for not believing it! Anything else?"

She shook her head, and he turned on Hadad.

"Hadad, lose no opportunity of whispering that Lawrence is with Feisul. Add that Lawrence doesn't want his presence known. Hunt out two or three loyal Arabs on the staff and tell them the plan is to kidnap Feisul and carry him to safety across the border; but don't do it too soon; wait until the debacle begins, and then persuade a few of them—old Ali, for instance and Osman—choose the old guard—you and they bolt with him to Haifa. The Syrians have been thoroughly undermined by propaganda; gas will do the rest and as soon as the Arabs see the Syrians run they'll listen to reason. They know you, and know you're on the level. Do you understand? Will you do that?"

"I will try. I see many a chance of spilling before this cup comes to the drinking, Jimgrim!"

"Then carry it carefully!" Grim answered. "Ramsden, take that car you came in. Find that banker. He's the boy who has bought Feisul's staff, or I'm much mistaken. Bring him here."

"Suppose he won't come?"

"Bring him. Take Jeremy with you. Try diplomacy first. Tell him that a plot to kidnap Feisul has been discovered at the last minute, but give him to understand that no suspicion rests on him. Get him if you can, to send a message to the French General Staff, warning them to watch for Feisul and two civilians and Lawrence in an auto. After that bring him if you have to put him in a sack."

"What's his name, and where does he live?"

"Adolphe René. Everybody knows his house. Jeremy, look as unlike Feisul as you can until the time comes, but study the part and be ready to jump into his clothes. Narayan Singh, stay with me. You and I will do the dirty work. Get busy, Ramsden."

CIRCUMSTANCES work clock-fashion, wheel fitting into wheel, when those tides that Shakespeare spoke of are at flood. Disregarding all the theory and argument about human will as opposed to cosmic law I say this, without any care at all who contradicts me:

That whoever is near the hub of happenings is the agent of Universal Law, and can no more help himself than can the watch that tells the hour. The men who believe that they make history should really make a thoughtful fellow laugh. "The moving finger writes, and having writ moves on;" old tent-maker Omar knew the truth of it. You could almost hear the balance-wheel of Progress click as the door opened before Grim had finished speaking, and a staff officer appeared to invite him to be present at Feisul's conference.

Grim asked at once for the auto for me (I couldn't have had it otherwise), and a moment later Jeremy and I were scooting into darkness through narrow streets and driving rain, with the hubs of the wheels awash in places and "shipping it green" over the floor when we dipped and pitched over a cross-street gutter. The Arab driver knew the way, from which I take it he had a compass in his head as well as a charm against accidents and a spirit of recklessness that put faith in worn-out springs. There wasn't room for more than one set of wheels at a time in most of the streets we tore through, but a camel tried to share one fairway with us and had the worst of it; he cannoned off into an alley 'hime end first, and we could hear him bellowing with rage a block away.

And our manner of stopping was like our progress, prompt. The brake-bands went on with a shriek and Jeremy and I pitched forward as the car brought up against the curb in front of an enormous door, whose brass knocker shone like gold in the rays of our headlights. We told the Arab to wait for us and stepped knee-deep into a pool invisible, stumbled and nearly fell over a great stone set to bridge the flood between street and door, then proceeded to use the knocker importunately, thunderously, angrily, as men with wet feet and bruised toes likely will, whatever the custom of the country.

We went on knocking, taking turns, until the door opened at last and the banker's servant peered at us with a candle in his hand, demanding to know in the name of the thousand and one devils whom Solomon boiled in oil what impudent scavengers were making all that noise. But the banker himself was in the background, thinking perhaps that the French had come already, on the look-out over the servant's shoulder for a glimpse of a *kêpi*. So we put our shoulders to the door, thrust by the servant, and walked in.

"Take care! I have a pistol in my hand!" said the banker's voice.

"Three shots for a shilling at me then!" retorted Jeremy.

"Who are you?"

"Tell that shivering fool to bring the candle, and you'll see!"

"Oh, you is it! I told you to come in the morning. I can't see you now."

"Can't see me, eh? Come in here and peel your eyes, cocky! Sit down and look at us. There, take a pew. Wonder where I learned such good English? Well, I used to shine the toe-nails of the Prince o' Wales, and you have to pass a Civil Service examination before they give you that good job. I talk any language except French and Jewish, but this master of mine turns out to be a Jew who talks French, and not a prize-fighter after all.

"What did I tell you this evening? Said he was a spy for the French, didn't I? I tell you, I'm a dependable man. What I say you can bet on till you've lost all your money. Here he is, spying to beat the promised landers—just had tea with Feisul and learned all the inside facts—offered me a pound to come and find you, but I charged him two and got the money in advance.

"You ought to pay me a commission, too, and then I'll get married if there's an honest woman left in Damascus. If either of you want my advice, you won't believe a word the other says, but I expect you're both too wilful to be guided. Anyhow, you'll have to talk in front of me, because my master is afraid of being murdered; he isn't afraid of ghosts or bad smells, but the sight of a long knife turns his heart to water and sets him to praying so loud that you can't get a word in edgewise. Go on, both of you—*yalla!* Talk!"

Does it begin to be obvious why kings used to employ court jesters? The modern cabinets should have them—men like Jeremy (though they'd be hard to find) to break the crust of situations. Suspicion weakens in the presence of incongruity.

"This fellow seems less than half-witted," I said, "but he's shrewd, and I've found him useful. Unfortunately he has picked up a lot of information, so we'll have to keep an eye on him. My business is to communicate with the French General Staff and I'm told you know how to manage it."

"Huh-huh? Who told you that?"

"Those who gave me my instructions. If you don't know who they are without my telling you, you're the wrong man and I'll not waste time with you."

"Let us suppose that I know then. Proceed."

"Your name was given to me as that of a man who can be trusted to take necessary action in the interests of—er—you understand?"

"Uh-huh!"

"The plot for Feisul to be kidnaped by some Syrian members of his staff has been discovered at the last minute," I said, looking hard at him; and he winced palpably.

"*Mon Dieu!* You mean——?"

"That it is not too late to save the situation. You have not been accused of connection with it. I came here in pursuance of a different plan to kidnap him—a sort of reserve plan, to be employed in case other means should fail. All arrangements are in working order except the one item of communicating with the French General Staff. I require you to accompany me for that purpose, and to send off to them immediately a message at my dictation."

"Tschaa! Suppose you show me your authority!"

"Certainly!" I answered.

Realizing that he wasn't in immediate danger of life he had returned his own pistol to his pocket. So I showed him the muzzle of mine, and he divined without a sermon on the subject that it would go off and shoot accurately unless he showed discretion. He didn't offer to move when Jeremy's agile fingers found his pocket and flicked out the mother-of-pearl-handled, rim-fire thing with which he had previously kept his courage warm.

"I was told not to trust you too far," I explained. "I was warned in advance that you might question my credentials. You are said to be jealous of interference. As a precaution against miscarriage of this plan through jealousy on your part, I was ordered to oblige you to obey me."

"And if I refuse?"

"Your widow will then be the individual most concerned. Be good enough to take pen and paper, and write a letter to my dictation."

Jeremy went to the door, which was partly open, made sure that the servant was out of earshot, and slammed it tight. René the banker went to his escritoire, took paper, and shook his fountain pen.

"How shall I commence the letter?" he asked me with a dry, sly smile.

He thought he had me there. There are doubtless proper forms of address that serve to establish the genuineness of letters written by a spy.

"Commence half-way down the page,"

I answered. "We'll insert the address afterwards. Write in French:

" 'I shall accompany the Emir Feisul and Colonel Lawrence to the front tonight, former plan having miscarried. When Syrian retreat begins look out for automobile containing Feisul and Lawrence, which may be recognized easily as it will also contain myself and another civilian in plain clothes. At the psychological moment a white flag will be shown from it, waved perhaps surreptitiously by one of the civilians. In the event of breakdown of the automobile a horsed vehicle will be used and the same signal will apply. For the sake of myself and the other civilian, please instruct all officers to keep a sharp lookout and protect the party from being fired on.'

"There," I said, "sign that and address it!"

He hesitated. He couldn't doubt that his own arrangements with traitors on the staff to kidnap Feisul had gone amiss, else how should I be aware of them at all—I, who had only arrived that evening in Damascus. But it puzzled him to know why I should make him write the letter, or—since his plan must have failed—why I should let him share in the kidnaping. He smelt the obvious rat. Why didn't I sign the letter myself, and get all the credit afterward, as any other spy would do.

"You sign it," he said, pushing the letter toward me, and I got one of those sudden inspirations that there is no explaining—*the right idea for handling fox René the banker.*

"So you're afraid to sign that, are you? All right; give it here, I'll sign it; pass me your pen. But you'll come along with me tonight, my lad, and make your explanations to the French in the morning!"

Looking back, I can see how the accusation worked, although it was an arrow shot at a venture. His greasy, sly, fox face with its touch of bold impudence betrayed him for a man who would habitually hedge his bets. Feisul's safe-conduct had protected him from official interference, but it had needed more than that to preserve him from unofficial murder and beyond a doubt he had betrayed the French in minor ways whenever that course looked profitable.

Now in a crisis he had small choice but to establish himself as loyal to the stronger side. He hurriedly wrote a number at the bottom of the letter, and another followed by three capitals and three more figures at the top.

"Seal it up and send it—quick!" I ordered him.

He obeyed and Jeremy called the servant.

"Summon François," said the banker, and the servant disappeared again.

François must remain a mystery. He was insoluble. Dressed in a pair of baggy Turkish pants, with a red sash round his middle, knotted loosely over a woollen jersey that had wide horizontal black and yellow stripes, with a gray woollen shawl over the lot, and a new tarboosh a size or two too small for him perched at an angle on his head, he stood shifting from one bare foot to the other and moved a toothless gap in his lower face in what was presumably a smile.

He had no nose that you could recognize, although there were two blow-holes in place of nostrils with a hideous long scar above them. One ear was missing. He had no eyebrows. But the remaining ear was pointed at the top like a satyr's, and his little beady eyes were as black as a bird's and inhumanly bright.

The banker spoke to him in the voice you would use to a rather spoilt child when obedience was all-important, using Arabic with a few French words thrown in.

"Ah, here is François. Good François! François, *mon brave*, here is a letter, eh? You know where to take it—eh? Ha-ha! François knows, doesn't he! François doesn't talk; he tells nobody; he's wise, is François! He runs, eh? He runs through the rain and the night; and he hides so that nobody can see him; and he delivers the letter; and somebody gives François money and tobacco and a little rum; and François comes running back to the nice little, dark little hole where he sleeps. Plenty to eat, eh, François? Nice soft food that needs no chewing! Nothing to do but run with a letter now and then, eh? A brave fellow is François—a clever fellow—a trustworthy fellow—a dependable, willing fellow, always ready to please! Ready to go?

"Well, there's the letter; be careful with it, and run—run—run like a good boy! A whole bottle of rum when you come back—think of it! A whole bottle of nice brown rum to yourself in that nice little room where your bed is! There, good-by!"

The creature addressed as François vanished, with a snort and a sort of squeal that may have been meant for speech.

"That is the best messenger in Syria,"

said René. "He is priceless—incorruptible, silent, and as sure as Destiny! The French General Staff will have that letter before dawn. Now—what next?"

"You come with me," I answered.

He felt better now that the message was on its way; second thought convinced him of my connection with the French. There is no more profitless delusion than to suppose that a country's secret agents are always its own nationals. They are almost always not.

If the French used only Frenchmen, Germany used none but Germans, Great Britain only Englishmen, and so on, it might be prettier and easier for the police, but intelligence departments would starve. So there was nothing about an obvious American doing spy-work for the French that should stick in his craw; and that being so, the more cheerfully he aided me the better it would likely be for him.

So he called for the servant again, and proved himself a good campaigner by superintending the packing of a big basket with provisions—bread and butter, cold chicken, wine, olives, and hot coffee in a thermos bottle.

"The French will be in Damsacus by noon tomorrow," he said. "Ha-ha! Those French and their hungry Algerians! We do well to take a good provision with us—enough for two days at least. We shall enter with them, I suppose, or at least behind them, and of course my house here will receive consideration; but—ha-ha!—how many chickens do you believe will be purchasable in Damascus one hour after the first Algerians get here? Eh? Put in another chicken, Hassan, *mon brave. Eh bien, oui*—pack the basket full; put in more of everything!"

At last he got into an overcoat lined with fox-pelt, for the night air was chilly and an overcoat is less trouble than blankets if you expect to spend a night on the move. We hove the huge basket into the waiting auto, slammed the front door of the house behind us, piled into the back seat and were off.

"I shall be glad when this business is over," said René with a sigh of satisfaction. "I am a banker by profession. For me the ebb and flow of trade, with its certainties and its discretions. But what would you? Trade must be prepared for; doors that will not open must be forced; those who stand in the way must be thrust aside. This Feisul is an impossible fellow. He is a hypocrite, I tell you—one of those praters about righteousness who won't understand that the church and the mosque are the places for that sort of thing. Eh? You follow me? But tell me, what has been done to Daulch, Hattin and Aubek? Were they backed against a wall and shot? Who betrayed them? Too bad that such a plan should fail, for it was perfect."

"Far from perfect," I answered; for that one piece of strategy I have by heart—the way to make a man tell all he knows is to pretend to superior knowledge.

"Heh? How could you improve on it? Three members of the staff to order *sauve qui peut* unexpectedly, seize Feisul, and deliver him dead or alive? What is better than that? But what has been done to the three?"

"Nothing," I answered.

"Just like him! Just like him! I tell you, that man Feisul would rather be a martyr than succeed at his proper business."

We reached the palace just as Feisul was leaving it. Several members of his staff were hard on his heels in the porch and our party was behind them again, with Mabel last of all. There was a line of waiting autos nearly long enough to fill the drive, but an utter absence of military fuss, and no shouting or hurry. It looked in the dark more like a funeral than the departure of a king to join his army at the front.

I remained in the car with the banker and sent Jeremy to report our doings to Grim. Presently I could see him standing under the porch lamp with a hand on Grim's shoulder, and I leaned out over the auto door to watch; but René the banker leaned back, snuggled up in his overcoat, liking neither to be seen nor to get his skin wet. I expected to see the three staff officers Daulch, Hattin and Aubek arrested there and then; but nothing happened, except that Feisul suddenly drove away with Mabel and Grim in the same car with him.

There followed a rush for the other cars, and the whole line started forward, Jeremy jumping in as our car passed the porch.

"Daulch, Hattin and Aubek are at the front," he said and began humming to himself.

"At the front?" demanded René, sitting upright suddenly. "At the front, you say? When did they leave for the front?"

"This evening," answered Jeremy.

You couldn't see his face in the dark, but I think he was chuckling.

"Strange!" said the banker. "Yet you say they have been betrayed—their plan is known—yet they left for the front this evening?"

It was pitch-dark inside the car, for the rain swished down in torrents and Jeremy fastened the flaps after he got in. René's change of expression was a thing that you could feel, not see. He kept perfect silence for about two minutes, while the car skidded and bumped at the rear of the procession. Then—

"You tell me that Feisul knows, and yet——"

"Oh, I didn't tell you that," laughed Jeremy. "It was this other man who said so. I never deceived any one; I'm an honest fellow, I am. Remember, I warned you against him when we talked in the hotel; you can't blame me. I told you he was up to mischief. I advised you to keep a careful eye on him and to look twice at his paper! *Wallah!* You must be a lamb in fox-skin. My master is a wolf in a woolly overcoat! Wait till you've seen him eat that chicken that you brought, and then you'll know what kind of a man he is!

"You see, you should have given me money when I asked you for it. I'm a fellow with a price, I am. Whoever pays my price gets his money's worth. If you'd had the sense to pay me more than this man does, I'd have helped you trick him instead of helping him trick you; but he gave me my wages before dinner and you gave me nothing, so here you are, and I wouldn't like to be keeping your pair of trousers warm! I tell you, this Ramsden *effendi* is an awful fellow, who will stick at nothing, and I'm worse because I'm honest and do what I'm paid to do!"

I took the precaution of putting my arm around René, for it was likely that he had another weapon hidden somewhere, and the obvious thing for him to do was to shoot the two of us and make a bolt for it. For a second I thought I felt his hand moving; but it was Jeremy's, searching all his pockets and feeling for hidden steel. So I pulled out a cigar and lit a match.

Of course, any one's face looks ghastly by that sort of sudden light; but René's was a picture of hate, rage, baffled cunning and fear, such as I had never seen; his eyes looked like an animal's at bay, and the way his lips parted from his teeth conveyed the impression that he was searching his mind wildly for a desperate remedy that would ruin all concerned except himself.

But it was only a stale old recourse that he had. In a man's extremity he turns by instinct to his own tin gods for help, and you may read his whole heart and religion then.

"Very well; very well," he said, as if he were on the rack, speaking hurriedly to get it over with, "I make the sacrifice. You will find my money in an inner pocket underneath my vest. It is a life's savings. Take it, and let me go. It is not much—only a little—I am not a rich man—I had hoped to be, but—it would mean a fortune to you no doubt. Take it and be merciful; give me back the smaller packet of the two, keep the larger and let me go."

Out of curiosity I reached inside his vest and pulled out both packets. Jeremy struck a match. The smaller packet contained a draft on Paris for a quarter of a million francs. The larger held nothing but correspondence. I returned them to him.

"Listen?" I said, "I've never yet murdered a man, so if you provide me with another excuse for murdering you, you'll be a virgin victim. Keep that in mind!"

CHAPTER XV

"Catch the Algies napping and kick —— out of 'em!"

YOU'RE no doubt familiar with the fact that the accounts given by two men who have witnessed a battle from the same angle will differ widely, not only in minor detail but in fundamentals; so you won't look to me for confirmation of any one of the countless stories that have seen the light of print, pretending to explain how the French won Damascus so easily and unexpectedly. I was only on the inside, looking outward as it were; the fellows on the outside, looking in, would naturally give a different explanation.

Then you must bear in mind that this is a day of "official" accounts that would make a limping dog of Ananias. When the General Staff of an invading army controls all the wires and all lines of communication you may believe what they choose to tell you, if you wish. But you don't have to, as they say in Maine. And I admit that all I saw was from a curtained auto as we swayed and bumped over broken roads, with an occasional interlude when Jeremy and I got out to lend our shoulders and help the Arab driver heave the car out of a slough.

My clearest memory is of that Arab—silent, stolid, staring like an owl straightforward most of the time—but a perfect marvel in emergencies, when he would suddenly spring to life, swear a living streak of brimstone blasphemy in high falsetto, and perform a driver's miracle.

By two hours after midnight we were running on four flat tires; and I've got the name of the maker of those wheels for future reference and use. One spring broke, but we went forward sailor-fashion, with a jury rig of chain and rope, after getting more gas from some Christian monks, who swore they hadn't any and wept when one of Feisul's officers demonstrated that they had. You couldn't see any monastery; I don't even know that there was one—nothing but lean faces with tonsured tops that nodded in unison and lied fearfully.

The gun-fire began to be heavy about that time, although nothing like the thousand-throated bedlam of Flanders. As neither side could see the other and neither had any ranges marked, my guess is that the French were advertising their advance—doing a little progaganda that was cheap for all concerned except the tax-payer. And the Syrian army was shooting back crazily, sending over long shots on the off-chance, more to encourage themselves than for any other reason.

The sensation was rather like riding in an ambulance away from the battle instead of toward it, for you couldn't see anything and you had a sense of helpless detachment from it all, as if a power you couldn't control were carrying you away from a familiar destiny to one that you couldn't imagine. It wasn't so much like a dream as like a different, real existence that you couldn't understand because it bore no kind of relation to anything in the past.

Anyhow, we bumped and blundered on until dawn came, streaked with wonderful rolling mist and gave a glimpse at intervals of a wide plain sloping toward the west, with long lines of infantry and here and there guns extended across it in parallels drawn north and south.

The rifle-firing started ten minutes after dawn, and it was all over in less than half an hour; but I can't describe exactly how the finish came, because the wind was toward us and the morning mist blew along in blanketing white masses that only allowed you a momentary glimpse and then shut off the view.

We were about a mile behind the firing-line and I couldn't see Feisul's car or any of the others. For the moment there was just one clear line of vision, straight from where I sat to the nearest infantry. I could see about fifty yards of the line and perhaps that many men; and they were blazing away furiously over a low earthwork, although I couldn't see a sign of the French. There was hardly any artillery firing at that time.

Suddenly without any obvious reason the men whose backs I was watching broke and ran. The mist obscured them instantly and the line of vision shifted, so that bit by bit I saw I dare say a mile of the firing line. The whole lot were running for their lives and look where I would, there wasn't a sign of a Frenchman anywhere.

I should say it took about ten minutes for the first of them to reach the dirt road, where our autos stood hub-deep in mud, and by that time we had shoved and pulley-hauled them into movement, our engines making as much row as a nest of machine guns as they struggled against the strain. We didn't want to be swamped under that tide of fugitives.

But they took no notice of us. They had thrown away their weapons and were running for home with eyes distended and nothing in mind but to put distance between them and the enemy. I jumped out of the car and seized one man.

"What are you running from? What has happened?" I demanded, holding him harder the more he struggled.

"Poison gas!" he gasped, and I let him go.

I thought I caught a whiff of the darned stuff then, but that may have been imagination.

"Poison gas!" I said, returning to the car, and Rene made a fine exhibition of himself, smothering his head under the fox-lined overcoat and screaming.

He got right down on the floor of the car and lay there huddled and gasping—which may have been a sensible precaution; I don't know. There was no time just then to bother with him.

The flukey morning breeze shifted several points. The mist curled suddenly and began to flow diagonally across our line of cars instead of toward us, and from one moment to the next you could see straight along the road for maybe a mile or more. There was a sight worth seeing—Feisul's cavalry in full rout—running away from ghosts by the look of it—their formation hardly yet broken, horse and man racing with the wind and a scattering of unhorsed fugitives streaming behind like a comet's tail.

According to Grim, who should know, that cavalry division was the king-pin of Feisul's plan. He had intended to lead a raid in person, swooping down the French flank to their rear; but the three staff-traitors, Daulch, Hattin and Aubek, sent forward the previous evening to place the division and hold it ready, had simply tipped the French off to the whole plan and at the critical moment of Feisul's arrival on the scene had ordered the *sauve-qui-peut.* I don't believe the French used more than a can or two of gas. I don't believe they had more than a few cans of it so far advanced.

But the *sauve-qui-peut* might have been useless without Feisul's capture, for he was just the man to rally a routed army and snatch victory out of a defeat. Nobody knew better than Feisul the weakness of the French communications, and the work of those three traitors was only half done when the cavalry took to its heels. The one man who could possibly save the day had to be bagged and handed over.

I didn't realize all that, of course, in the twinkling of an eye, as they say you do in a climax. Maybe I've never faced a climax. I'm no psychologist and not at all given to review of sudden situations in the abstract.

There was a fight, or a riot, or something like it going on near the head of our line of autos. The first two or three had come to a standstill; several in the middle of the line were trying to wheel outward and bolt for it behind the fleeing cavalry and those at the tail end were blocked by one that had broken down. Of course everybody was yelling at the top of his lungs and the hurrying shreds of blown mist further confounded the confusion.

So Jeremy and I ran forward, plunging through the mud and knocking over whoever blocked our way. It was rather fun—like the football field at school. But one man—a Syrian officer—stood near the last of the forward cars with the evident purpose of standing off interference. He took careful aim at me with a revolver, fired point-blank, and missed.

I forgot all about my own pistol and went for him with a laugh and a yell of sheer exhilaration. There's an eighth of a ton of me, mostly bone and muscle, so it isn't a sinecure to have to stop my fist when the rest of the bulk is under way behind it. I landed so hard on his nose, and with such tremendous impetus, that he hadn't enough initial stability to take the impact and bring me up on my feet. He went down like a nine-pin, I on top of him, laughing with mud in my teeth and Jeremy landed on top of the two of us, holding the skirts of his cloak in both hands as he jumped.

Jeremy picked up the fellow's revolver and threw it out of sight, and the two of us ran on again—too late by now to help in the emergency, but in time for the next event.

Grim had managed everything, although he was bleeding, and smiling serenely through the blood. Hadad was there, not smiling at all, but bleached white with excitement; he had brought a number of Arab officers with him, six or seven of whom were standing on the running-board of the front car and all arguing with Feisul, who sat back with his feet and hands tied, guarded by Narayan Singh.

At Grim's feet—dead, with bullets through their heads—were three Syrian staff-officers. They were the traitors Daulch, Hattin and Aubek. Grim's pistol was in his right hand and had been used.

There had been a first-class fight, all over in two minutes; for the traitors hadn't arrived on the scene without assistants. Unfortunately for them, Hadad had turned up at the same moment with his loyalists. Narayan Singh had jumped from the car behind and seized Feisul, thrown him to the floor out of the path of bullets, and tied his arms. It was actually Mabel, hardly realizing what she was doing but obeying the Sikh's orders yelled in her ear as he struggled to keep his wiry prisoner down, who tied the king's feet, using her Arab girdle.

Feisul of course, was all for dying at the head of a remnant of his men. That would be the first impulse of any decent leader in like circumstance. But his loyal friends, eager to die with him if the must, but unwilling to die at all if there were an alternative, were overwhelming him with streams of words and promises. Suddenly two of them jumped into the car and began to untie his arms and feet. Grim, looking swiftly to right and left, saw Jeremy and pounced on him so fiercely that an onlooker might have guessed another fight to the death was under way. Too excited to say what he had in mind, he tugged at Jeremy's clothes.

"I get you, Jim—I get you!" Jeremy laughed gaily, and in ten seconds had stripped himself down to his underwear.

Hadad must have been discussing details of the plan with Grim along the road; for he got busy at the same time persuading Feisul to part with his garments—not that his consent really mattered at the moment; they were pulled off him by half a dozen hands at once and Jeremy had the best of that bargain all right, for in addition to silk headdress and a fine black Arab full-dress coat, there was linen of a sort you can't buy—better stuff than bishops wear and clean, which Jeremy's own wasn't.

The time it takes to read this gives a totally false impression of the speed. The whole thing took place, I should say, within two minutes from the time when I punched that Syrian's nose until Mabel and Narayan Singh stood beside me watching Hadad, two more Arabs and Feisul drive away, with a second car crowded full of loyalists in close attendance.

By that time Jeremy was dressed in Feisul's clothes; and though he didn't look a bit like Feisul from a yard away, in the mist at ten yards, provided you were looking for Feisul, you'd have taken your Bible oath he was the man; for he had the gesture and mannerism copied to perfection.

However, standing there wasn't going to increase the real Feisul's chance of escaping. The sooner we got caught, the quicker the French would discover that our man had given them the slip. Our business was to give the French a long chase in the wrong direction and those bogged autos weren't ideal for the purpose.

But they were the only means in sight just then, and we had to bear in mind that message I had made Rene send, warning the French to look out for an auto with a white flag and two civilians together with Feisul and Lawrence. So we picked out the two best that remained, pitched Rene and his basket of provisions into the front one with Mabel and Jeremy, piled Narayan Singh in after them to take my place as the second civilian, and started them off straight forward, Grim and I following in a second car after I had feed our former Arab driver handsomely and sent him off grinning to give a lift to as many runaways as the car would hold.

We learned afterward that the rascal made a fortune, charging as much as fifty pounds sterling for the trip half-way back to Damascus, at which point the car collapsed. They say he carried eleven officers that far, bought two wives with the proceeds and escaped all the way to a village near Mecca, where his home was.

You know how bewildering and tricky those early mists are when they start to roll up before the wind. We had hardly got going when the whole mass seemed to shift in one great cloud, covering the fleeing troops and incidentally Feisul, but leaving us in our two autos high and dry, as it were, in full view of the French. And they were advancing by that time.

I couldn't see more than a division of them that we would have to reckon with—nearly all Algerians—and they looked dead-weary. I guess they had forced the pace in advance of the main body in order to take advantage of the treason of Feisul's officers. They came slouching forward with their rifles at the trail and a screen of skirmishers thrown out a quarter of a mile or so ahead.

There were cavalry and guns far off on their right, evidently trying to work around to the flank of the fleeing army, but those were much too far away to trouble us and were going in the wrong direction. Rolling banks of mist shut off the farther view to westward and there was no guessing where the main French force might be, and for all I know it hadn't started from the coast yet.

FORTUNE came to our rescue with one riderless horse, a splendid Arab gelding tied by the bridle to the wheel of a water-cart and left behind in the stampede. Jeremy appropriated it, riding Arab fashion with short stirrups, and I wouldn't have blamed Feisul's own brother for falsely identifying him at ten yards. He was born mischievous and he caricatured Feisul on horseback as if he were acting for the movies.

I guess the French officers had good glasses with them, for Jeremy had hardly mounted when the advancing Algerians opened a hot fire on us. The whole division surely wouldn't have blazed away, with machine guns and all, at two cars and a man on horseback unless some one had passed the word along that Feisul was in full view.

So Grim and I abandoned our car, driver and all, and jumped into Jeremy's place. It wasn't more than two hundred yards to the top of a gentle rise, over which we disappeared from view; and just as we bumped over it I wrenched out the white table-cloth in which René's chicken and stuff was wrapped and waved it violently.

Then, Lord! What a sight. Below us, sheltered between two flanking hillocks, was about a division of Feisul's Arab infantry, packing up sulkily, preparing to follow the retreat. It was a safe bet the French didn't know they were there, and I dare say the same thought occurred to every one of us the same instant. Mabel thought of it. I know I did. But Jeremy voiced it first, heeling his horse up beside us.

"What do you say, Jim? I bet you I can rally that gang. Shall I lead 'em and lick —— out of the Algies?"

But Grim shook his head.

"You might, but the game is to pull the plug properly. Get this lot on the run. The less fighting, the less risk of drasticism when the French get to Damascus. Chase 'em off home!"

So Jeremy did it; and that, I believe, accounts for a story that got in the newspapers about Feisul trying to spring a surprize on the French at the last minute. Some French officers in armored cars came over the brow of the hill in pursuit of us—three cars, three officers, three machine-guns, and about a dozen men. One car quit on the hill-top, so I suppose it broke down, but its occupants must have seen Jeremy careering up and down the line encouraging those sulky Arabs to get a move on, and I suppose they told tales afterward to a newspaper correspondent at the base.

Anyhow, the two pursuing armored cars didn't dare come near enough to be dangerous until we had followed the retreating Arab regiments for about a mile, and the Algerians appeared over the hill-top, coming very slowly. A long-range rifle-fire commenced, the Arabs returning it scrappily as they retreated; and we made believe there were other regiments to be shepherded, steering a northward course downhill toward broken ground that couldn't have suited our purpose better. By the way those armored cars came after us, keeping their distance, it was clear enough that they suspected an ambush.

So we had a clear start and led them a dance in and out among boulders and the branches of a watercourse, Jeremy galloping ahead to spy a course out. Whenever they came in view we acted a little piece for them, making René wave the white cloth while I protected him and held off Mabel and Grim, who went through the motions of trying to brain me with pistol butts.

Two or three times they opened fire, more by way of forcing a surrender, I think, than with any intention of hitting us; they wanted to take Feisul alive. It was like a game of fox and geese, and with Jeremy scouting ahead we could have kept them dodging us for hours if we hadn't run out of gas.

Then we abandoned the car and took refuge in a cave that stank as if it had been a tomb for generations. The French drew up their cars fifty yards away with machine guns covering the cave mouth; and after we were sure they weren't going to squirt a stream of lead at us, I went out with the table-cloth to negotiate terms. I didn't want to go, but Grim seemed to think they'd understand my French.

Of course, there wasn't anything really to argue about, but I played for time, because every minute was of value to the real Feisul, speeding on his way to British territory. The French officer who did the talking for his side—a little squat, pale, pug-faced fellow, who gave the impression of having risen from the ranks without learning polite manners on the way, agreed to accept our surrender and spare our lives for the time being; and by that time the smell in the cave had nearly overcome our party, so they all marched out.

And Lord! That French captain was spiteful when he discovered that Jeremy wasn't Feisul after all. He swore like a wet cat, accused Mabel of being a spy, took away our basket of provisions, and I think would have shot Jeremy out of hand if Jeremy hadn't started clowning and made the other Frenchmen laugh.

Laughter and murder no more mix than oil and water. He did what he called a harem dance for them, misusing his stomach outrageously, and the incongruity of that by a descendant of the Prophet took all the sting out of the situation. But they burned our abandoned car in sheer ill-temper before crowding us into their own. And they shot the good horse.

The joy-ride that followed was rather like the kind they give pigs on the way to the sausage-shop—hurried and not intended to be mirthful.

"What's the use of losing tempers?" I asked Captain Jacques Daudet, who had captured us.

He sat on my knees, with his pistol pressed against my chest. "Why not regard the whole thing as a joke? You've done your best and nobody can blame you. Besides, what can possibly happen? What do you suppose they'll do to us?"

He shrugged his shoulders and his little cold blue eyes met mine.

"You will all be shot, of course," he answered. "After that——"

He shrugged his shoulders again. But he cast no gloom; for Jeremy kept the lot of us, French too, excepting Daudet, in roars of laughter for ten miles until we reached temporary headquarters, where a born gentleman in a peaked red cap with gold on it sat on a camp-stool directing things.

He recognized Grim at the first glance and knew him for an American in British service. He looked Grim in the eye and smiled. We told our story in turns, interrupting one another and being interrupted by René. The officer turned on the banker savagely, ordered him sent to the rear, and smiled at Grim again.

Then he picked up the banker's belongings, including the two packages and tossed them after him with an air of utter contempt. Whereat he smiled at all of us.

"And you are quite sure that the Emir Feisul has escaped?" he asked. "Well: there are those whom the news will annoy, which is too bad, but can't be helped. For myself, I can not say that I shall shed tears. *Madame*—" He looked straight at Mabel. "Major—" He met Grim's eyes and smiled. "*Messieurs*—" It was my turn, and Narayan Singh's; his steady stare was good and made you feel like shaking hands with him. "Monsieur Scapin*—" That was meant for Jeremy, and they both laughed. "You have been adroit, but do you think I could depend on your discretion?"

We did our best to look discreet.

"You see, *Madame et Messieurs*, this is not warfare. We desire to accomplish a definite object with as little unpleasantness as possible. I shall regret the necessity of sending you to Beirut, but that is for your safety. An additional and very sound precaution which you yourselves might take would be to preserve complete silence regarding the events of the last two days. Subject to that condition, you will be given facilities for leaving Beirut by sea in any direction you may wish. Do we understand one another? Good. Now, let me see whether I have your names correctly."

He carefully wrote them down all wrong, described us as noncombatants, who should be allowed to leave the country, warned Jeremy that in a king's clothes he looked too "intriguing," provided plain clothes for him, returned our belongings (except the basket of provisions, which he kept) and sent us off in an ambulance on the first leg of the journey to Beirut, whence we got away in a coastwise steamer within the week.

"Not all the French are swabs!" said Jeremy grievously as we took our leave of him.

Grim agreed.

"Not all of 'em. Let's see—there was the Marne, the Aisne, the Somme, Verdun——"

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*Clown.

"MIDNIGHT" JOHNSON

by Fredrick J. Jackson

Author of "Unwept, Unhonored and Unhung," "Reverse Irish," etc.

A JANUARY southwester howled up the California coast. Humboldt Bar was "breaking clear across." From jetty to jetty the long, narrow entrance was a seething mass of roaring, crashing foam. Huge green combers, flecked to a grayish tinge by sand, rose "mountain high" from the south, crashed on and over the jetty and tumbled, boiling, across the channel. On to the middle ground—the real bar, outside the jetties—drove angry, plunging seas, filled with titanic force and hungry to destroy.

Outside the bar, hove to as they rode the hissing, storm-driven swells, five steamers lay bar-bound. Three were lumber-vessels. Aboard the other two were huddled scores of seasick, miserable passengers.

For two days they had gazed pathetically toward the land they were impotent to reach until Humboldt Bar chose to come down from its high horse. The masters of the storm-bound craft were old in experience. They knew Humboldt Bar; they feared it, and were blameless in their fear. The bar on a rampage was a thing to respect; the alternative was likely to be another ship as a permanent addition to the graveyard of the Humboldt sands.

Up from the south on the wings of the gale steamed the ancient *Elk River*, every seam and plank in her wooden hull straining as she plunged in the heavy seaway. Ten knots was her approximate speed as she approached the bar-bound fleet. Seven knots were supplied by her laboring, trembling engines and three by wind and wave. A leaky, small, under-powered, battered tub. Built in the early eighties, she had for years narrowly flirted with inspectors' condemnation.

On her bridge, engine-room telegraph ready to his hand, stood her skipper, peering intently into the cloud of spume arising from the seething bar ahead. For years Steve Johnson had held down the bridge of "the old sieve" as he fondly termed her. He was known as the most daring navigator on the coast.

Behind his back seamen called him "Midnight" Johnson. The reason for this title was one of the favorite yarns of coastwise mariners who delighted in his daring exploits, at the same time envying him for them.

Johnson was nearly forty; he looked a scant thirty. His hair, even at the temples, rivaled the hue of a raven. His clear gray-blue eyes had the ready twinkle of a smile; and the corners of his firm mouth were turned up in a habitual quirk of optimistic good nature.

His eyes now, as his steamer lurched in toward the bar, were narrowed to a squint for protection from the stinging spray dashing across the bridge. His sou'wester, the better to protect his face, was cocked aslant.

Near the whistling buoy Johnson's vessel passed within a cable-length of the bar-bound *City of Arcata*. Johan Lindstrom, master of this passenger craft, had sailed some years before as first officer under Johnson. Now, from the bridge, he seized the whistle cord and jerked out several blasts in greeting to his old commander. Johnson waved an arm, then replied in kind.

A moment later, running lightly despite his heavy sea-boots and the wild tossing of the craft, Johnson descended the spray-drenched companionway and entered the wheel-house to take over the helm. This was out of the ordinary for a master, but what Johnson was about to do was likewise out of the ordinary. He intended to cross the bar!

His steamer poked in toward the hazardous middle ground. Soon she took a comber from abeam, a giant sea that crashed down with the force of a miniature Niagara. Watchers on the bar-bound fleet gasped in alarm; for a moment they could see nothing but two masts sticking out of a foam-topped sea and lurching in a wild arc across the sky-line. A moment of uncertainty; then she bobbed up like a duck, water streaming in sheets from off her decks and housing.

On she went toward the jetties. Smothered repeatedly by cross-seas, careening wildly, staggering up again, rolling at times to such an angle that it seemed impossible she could ever regain an even keel, only to recover and roll as far on the other beam, the *Elk River* plunged on and on until she reached the calm waters of Humboldt Bay.

Inside the haven Johnson relinquished the helm and climbed back on to the bridge.

Men there were who accused Johnson of recklessness in his invariable venturing across Humboldt Bar. With others he bore the reputation of an out-and-out daredevil. When questioned as to his successful passages where others had met disaster he frankly replied that he did not know. He did it—that was all. He knew the bar in all its moods, and trusted to his judgment.

In past years several masters at different times had attempted to follow Johnson's craft across the bar. Invariably they had been led to destruction. Battered hulks, ever sinking deeper in the breaker-washed sands, told the fate of many of these vessels. To attempt to use Johnson as a pilot had come to be admitted nothing less than suicide.

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AS THE *Elk River* gained sheltered waters, Captain Lindstrom, on the bridge of the *City of Arcata*, lowered a pair of binoculars from his eyes and wiped cold perspiration mixed with spume from his brow as he turned to his second officer.

"Mr. Jennings, there's something supernatural about the man who just crossed that bar," he declared gravely.

Jennings was new on the coast; this was his first trip to Humboldt.

"Who is he, sir?"

"Midnight Johnson. You must have heard of him. Why, he makes the rest of us look like mail-order seamen when it comes to crossing a hellish patch like that. You saw what his ship went through. I wouldn't attempt it right now for the contents of the San Francisco mint. It'd be my luck to bang the whole bottom out of my vessel. And Johnson's been getting away with it for ten years—it's all in the day's work to him. Any weather, any time of day or night, almost any stage of the tide—he crosses the bar."

"What's supernatural about it?" inquired the second officer. "He just takes a chance, and gets away with it."

"Not by a row of belaying-pins! In the Spring of 1907 I was mate on the *Elk River*. One day in the middle of the afternoon watch we rounded the buoy and started in. The bar was bad, but not like today. Several boats had made the passage that afternoon. There was nothing particularly dangerous about it. But swiggle me if Johnson didn't get across the middle ground, take a look at the channel between the jetties, then 'bout ship and head out to sea again.

"I says: 'What's the matter, captain? Look bad?'

" 'Not very bad,' he replies. 'But I don't like it, and I don't know why. I've got a funny feeling, that's all.'

"I was wondering what to make of it. I thought he was crazy. The *Lorena* had come along just as we went about. She headed right in. You'll see her bones in there beyond the north jetty. A sixteen-hundred-ton vessel—mail-carrier. Johnson finally got another hunch, and we started in about half a mile or so astern of the *Lorena*.

"She gets in between the jetties opposite the breakers on the north spit, and then as I was watching her right up out of nowhere breaks a whopping big sea—just a pure freak. I yelled out—I couldn't help it—as I saw her picked up by a wall of water higher than her stack. It carried her clear over the north jetty and dropped her into the shallow breakers. Dumped on to the sand so hard that it broke her back. And it all happened while you could draw a long breath.

"You can't tell me it wasn't the supernatural that prompted Johnson to turn back."

Lindstrom grinned reminiscently, then continued.

"Johnson ordered me to say nothing about his hunch to any newspaper men. I said nothing in Eureka, but when we arrived back in San Francisco—well, it made a fine story. Johnson fired me for letting it out. And yet I like him all the more for it."

In the mean time the *Elk River* steamed up the bay and was docked at the Hammond Lumber Mills. Johnson hired a gang of longshoremen, who began to pour lumber into the vessel's hold.

His business finished for the day, Johnson spruced up for a dinner engagement at the home of the mill superintendent. When he stepped ashore, clad in blue serge, well-fitted black shoes, dark overcoat and dark fedora, no stranger would have suspected this quiet, handsome, smiling-eyed chap of being one of the most daring navigators on the coast. His face, reddened severely by exposure, was the only hint that he followed the sea.

Two days later when the *Elk River* completed her cargo and started seaward the gale still raged up the coast. The *City of Arcata* and other craft, now seven in number, still lay riding out the storm on the open sea, their masters not yet daring to hazard the bar.

Within the harbor several lumber-laden steamers lay swinging to their mudhooks, awaiting an opportunity to get out of the bay without putting their owners in line to collect insurance money. The *Elk River* was low in the water with a twelve-foot deckload.

As she passed each steamer anchored in the channel, Midnight Johnson religiously went through a time-worn ritual of yanking derisive blasts from the whistle. It was his pleasant way of saying as a boy would say:

"Yah! Watch *me* do it!"

Each captain at receiving these mocking hails momentarily and fervently cursed Johnson's cockiness. Invariably, however, each affronted skipper found himself saying—

"Well, I hope the —— fool makes it again!"

Such is the fellowship of the sea; they wished him well even while resenting what they thought his blatant conceit.

This time Johnson's luck slipped a minor cog. In crossing the raging middle ground the *Elk River* bumped her keel on the bar—just once, but hard enough to make Johnson grit his teeth.

Forty-five hours later she reached San Francisco. The distance by sea to the Golden Gate is two hundred and sixteen miles. Thus it can readily be seen that this passage was no record-breaker—unless for slowness. But the *Elk River* was making money for her owners, something many vessels failed to do in the lumber trade on the Winter run to Humboldt.

Naturally other shipping firms looked with covetous eyes on a captain who dared contend with Humboldt Bar in stormy weather. Many were the tempting offers for Johnson's services. But he rejected them all, preferring the bridge of his beloved tub.

This, however, proved to be the *Elk River's* last voyage. The last thump on the bar had strained open too many more of her ancient seams. Failing to pass inspection, she was hauled on to what is the last resting-place of hundreds of good ships—the mud-flats of Oakland Creek. Johnson found himself out of a berth.

SOLICITATIONS for his services were many; and now that the *Elk River* had passed into the boneyard he decided to cut loose from his old company, which owned nothing but small lumber steamers. Higher wages and greater chance for advancement in passenger-carriers was the lure. Influenced partly by friendship, he accepted the offer made by the Madison Navigation Company.

Madison, its president, was the man who induced Johnson to enter the company's service. During the Spring and early Summer he commanded a steamer running to Puget Sound, while awaiting the arrival of the *Westland*, a new addition to the Madison fleet. This steamer, built that Spring in Philadelphia, was upon its arrival on the west coast to be placed on the Humboldt run.

It was early in June when he took the *Westland* on its first voyage to Eureka. The officials of the Madison Navigation Company congratulated themselves. With Midnight Johnson on the bridge they figured the fast two-thousand-ton *Westland* should never be forced to suffer long delays on account of a rough bar.

Their jubilation was short-lived. At noon of a calm day, with Humboldt Bar figuratively as smooth as a mill-pond, Johnson piled the steamer on to the south jetty.

Salvage operations cost thirty thousand dollars. Inquiry as to the cause of the wreck finally fixed the blame on to the failure of the steam steering-gear to respond at a critical moment.

Johnson was held blameless—almost. As a matter of form his license was suspended for sixty days. It was not until the end of this period that the *Westland* again was ready for service. The faith of the company was unshaken. Johnson returned to command.

And again he failed to bring the steamer into Humboldt Bay. With another comparatively smooth bar he ran her on to the rocks of the north jetty. Again the *Westland*, kept afloat by air-casks, was towed to San Francisco for repairs.

The wreck was pronounced to be due to sheer negligence and incompetence, and Johnson's license was revoked for the three remaining years of its duration. Wiseacres shook their heads and declared that his luck had played out. For weeks Johnson's successively banging the *Westland* on to the rocks on a smooth bar was a ripe topic on bridges and at dining-tables of coast steamers.

Booze! That was the only answer—according to the verdict of this unofficial seafaring jury. As a matter of fact Johnson had never known the taste of liquor.

The *Westland*, after coming out of drydock with eighteen new plates in her hull, was not restored to the Humboldt run. With a new master on her bridge she was put on the non-stop San Francisco-Portland route.

Four months passed, and Johnson had been unable to obtain a berth as high as first officer. He had lost caste. The sea is a hard mistress and hardens those who follow her. A broken skipper has the respect of none, even though he may have the sympathy of all.

At last he landed a berth—as second mate on a tub even lower in the maritime social scale than the *Elk River*—a gasoline schooner that went "dog-hole running" to various outside ports on the Mendocino coast.

An outside port is one that has no harbor at all; loading vessels depending on the clemency of the weather to allow them to lie moored a short distance offshore while taking cargo from the cliffs by an overhead cable or through a flexible lumber chute. Johnson did not like the life—but a man must live.

With the coming of Winter the outside ports were closed, loading at them being impracticable. Again Johnson found himself out of a berth.

He thought himself lucky to sign on as first officer of the *Jim Custer*, a small steam schooner under charter to the Mexican Government. For weeks in the harbor of Las Floras, on the Gulf of California, the vessel lay idly at anchor, her wooden bottom a prey for teredos and a farm for tropical underwater vegetation.

The man who originally gave the name to Port Las Floras evidently had been possessed of sardonic humor. Instead of the tropical paradise its name implied, it was in reality a detached part of an inferno—when considered as a place for a white man to live.

THE harbor was good; a narrow bay protected amply by two headlands. But the town was a pesthole, its sole excuse for existence being the selection of the bay by some misguided engineer as the logical terminus for the Mexican Western Railroad. Behind the town lay several miles of miasmatic swamp, from which at all times the nauseating stench of decayed vegetable matter drifted in through the streets. And each night a gentle land breeze blew seaward from the inland mountains.

On its fever-laden, miasmatic breath came hordes of mosquitoes which made cabins of vessels in the harbor their favorite rendezvous. Screens on port-holes and doors were almost useless; in some mysterious manner the pests found entrance and tormented the lives of the occupants.

Of social life in Las Floras there was none, save of the lowest order. Last of all—and worst—of this unpleasant picture of existence was the humidity—dank, stifling, unbearable. It was killing to men accustomed to temperate climes.

For half of the six months of the charter period Johnson refused to follow the course taken by his shipmates. At last he weakened—almost any man would, under the conditions—and took to drink. He welcomed the relief it gave from his periods of morbid brooding as well as forgetfulness of the enervating climate. Meanwhile he cherished the delusion that upon arriving back in San Francisco he would swear off. But from this time on his descent was methodical and rapid.

THREE years later found him a common drunken bum of a seaman. Only once in the interval had he found a berth as officer, and liquor had cost him this job. Straightening up for a brief period at the end of his license revocation, he passed the examination and received a new license.

With this in his possession he called upon Madison, his former employer, seeking a berth.

"Get out of my office, you drunken fish," said Madison. "I wouldn't trust you in command of a mud-scow."

Word of this turn-down got around. Ship-owners who might still have been swayed to trust his skill as a navigator would have none of him on account of his drunkenness. He was unable to find a berth in any capacity above that of able-bodied seaman.

This hurt; therefore more liquor to take the bitter taste from life as he found it. His once erect figure grew stooped from hard labor; his eyes were dull with a light of hopelessness; his hair rapidly turned gray from the anguish within his heart at what he considered the unjustness of the world.

He brooded long and often as he mentally re-lived the desperate moments in which he had striven with every resource at his command to prevent the *Westland* from going on the rocks. And he never found a solution to the puzzle of why a steamer should disregard her helm and go to destruction as a bit of steel is drawn to a powerful magnet.

Four years passed, four years of signing as A. B. on coastwise voyages—the shorter the better—with but one thought in mind; to make money with which to purchase whisky. Prohibition came into force, but its only effect in San Francisco was to raise the price of whisky and make it harder to obtain.

It was still plentiful when, one December after a round trip to Gray's Harbor, Johnson was paid off in San Francisco.

He managed to make his money last through a week's carouse. The eighth day after being paid off found him penniless, sober, bitter in heart and mind, and ready to sign on for another voyage—anywhere.

And at this time Captain Johan Lindstrom, walking along the Embarcadero, ran across his former commander.

"Hello, Johnson, old man!" was Lindstrom's hearty greeting. "What's on your mind?"

Johnson, sullenly lowering his head to hide his face, sought escape. Lindstrom caught his arm in a firm grasp.

"None of that, Midnight. This is the first time in seven years I've seen you. You haven't a chance of getting away. I've heard a lot about your —— fool trick of letting yourself go on the reefs. Come along with me now. You need a friend, and I'm elected. No, don't try to argue. I'm in luck at finding you, and you're coming with me."

Perforce Johnson accompanied the man he had at one time discharged for talking to a newspaper reporter. The session ended with Johnson signing as seaman on the *Charlotte*, a new four-thousand-ton, seventeen-knot coast liner, which had just been placed in commission between San Francisco and Seattle. Lindstrom was in command.

It was his intention to straighten Johnson out by keeping him under his eye, and later taking him on as an officer. Lindstrom better than any man knew Midnight Johnson's capabilities, and still had faith in him.

The *Charlotte* was now the crack liner of the Madison Navigation Company. And on this particular voyage Madison had reserved passage for himself and his family, with the intention of spending the Christmas holidays with relatives in Seattle.

At ten in the morning, in the teeth of a howling southwester, the steamer put out through the Golden Gate. To avoid the creaming combers on San Francisco Bar, which is several miles off the Cliff House, Lindstrom headed out by the north channel outside Duxbury Reef. Soon Point Reyes was sighted.

Losing this landmark, Lindstrom laid a compass course as the *Charlotte* ran northward with the gale, a heavy screen of flying spume rendering the shore invisible. Point Arena was picked up dimly through the flying haze, then for the rest of the day Lindstrom was forced to depend on dead reckoning, with no chance of checking up by landmarks.

At ten o'clock that night Lindstrom signaled the engine room for half-speed, and the steamer loafed along. According to dead reckoning she was at that hour a mile or so outside the Blunt's Reef lightship.

Uncertain currents and the still more variable element of leeway in the shifting gale made Lindstrom anxious to verify his calculations by the lightship. With night binoculars to his eyes, he braced himself on the reeling bridge and endeavored to penetrate the curtain of wind-driven spray and rain to the eastward.

In sudden panic Jennings, who was now Lindstrom's first officer, rushed across the bridge. To make himself heard above the shriek of the gale he bellowed through cupped hands:

"My ——, captain! The light is off the port beam!"

Lindstrom turned in haste. Binoculars were unnecessary. About two miles to the westward, visible through a momentary rift in the scud, danced the lightship's beacon. The steamer was in dire peril. He bawled out an order—

"Starboard the hel-lum!"

This in the misleading phraseology of the sea means to turn the steamer to port.

The *Charlotte* swung to the westward.

Too late! A sudden shock and crash threw both officers from their footing. The steamer shuddered throughout her length as if she had received a death blow. Another tearing, gouging crash against the sharp pinnacles of the submerged reef! Then a lesser bump.

Followed several agonizing moments of uncertainty in which the men on the bridge scarce dared draw their breath. But there were no more shocks other than those of tremendous seas smashing abeam.

"The bottom must be ripped out of her!" shouted the mate, trembling.

Lindstrom turned to a speaking tube and blew a prolonged blast. Came a response.

"Start the pumps, and sound the well!" were the orders.

The *Charlotte* had steamed clear of the threatening reefs, but soon from the engine-room came a report to the effect that water was pouring in faster than it could be handled by the pumps. Several plates in her bottom had been started, and each abrupt fetching-up of the steamer as she slid down the slope of a mountain swell was such a strain that more rivets were pulling out.

"It's getting worse! We can't last two hours! The fires will be flooded before that!" was the next report from below.

His face haggard and drawn, Lindstrom dropped the speaking-tube. In all, the steamer carried two hundred and sixty-seven people. He was responsible for their safety; and now, if the chief's report were true, they stood no chance at all. In the life-boats lay no hope, for no small boat could live a minute in the hungry, breaking seas that were running.

Shuddering, Lindstrom grasped the binnacle for support. He felt suddenly lifeless. Now that he wished to use his brain it seemed benumbed, frozen.

On to the bridge, clad only in overcoat, pajamas and slippers, rushed Madison.

"What happened, captain?" he shouted.

And in the dim light of the binnacle he caught fair sight of Lindstrom's face.

"Man, you look like a wraith! Is there danger?"

"Danger!"

Hollowly Lindstrom echoed the word, then laughed bitterly.

"We struck a ledge off Blunt's Reef. We'll last an hour or so—that's all."

"Run her ashore! Get out the boats! Man, do something!"

"Run her ashore? On this coast? With this sea? That's murder to attempt. And to try the boats is worse."

Lindstrom's voice carried a thin note that made it seem to be coming from a distance.

"Can't you make port? Some port—any port?"

The stricken master gestured with impatience and despair.

"San Francisco is two hundred miles astern. Columbia River is almost twice that ahead. Between them there isn't a haven that can be entered in this gale and on this black night."

"How about Humboldt Bay?" desperately.

"It's the only real harbor within reach. It's twenty miles away, and it might as well be twenty hundred."

"Why? Won't she stay afloat long enough to reach it?"

"Suffering hymnbooks!" wailed Lindstrom. "You know how Humboldt Bar holds up your vessels. It's plain —— to-night with this gale. Nothing can cross it——"

Lindstrom left the end of the sentence unfinished. A light of hope on his face, he suddenly grasped Madison's arm.

"A MIRACLE has happened. Midnight Johnson is the only man who *can* take a steamer into Humboldt on a night like this."

"Bah! He wrecked the *Westland* twice when the bar was calm. What could that four-flusher do?"

"More than you think. How did he get his nickname?"

"What difference does that make? Even if he could help us he's not here."

"But that's the miracle. He is aboard! Yesterday for the first time in seven years I ran across him. He's for'ard in the fo'csle now."

Lindstrom turned abruptly and disappeared from the bridge.

Madison started to follow, then stopped and stood shivering, the bottoms of his thin pajamas whipping in the gale, until Lindstrom returned with Johnson. Behind them came two other officers.

In the hang-dog attitude which had grown on him with years of drunkenness and rebuffs from former friends, Johnson stood uncertainly waiting. He had been sleeping soundly—his first real sleep in three nights—and even the steamer's banging against the rocks had failed to awaken him.

Lindstrom as yet had told him nothing; had simply ordered him on to the bridge. Madison's lip curled as he disdainfully eyed the broken-down man. Momentarily he had forgotten the danger.

"We're going down," shouted Lindstrom. "Our only hope is to get into Humboldt Bay. Can you take us across the bar?"

Like a bird dog at sight of his master removing a gun from its rack, at the mention of Humboldt Johnson straightened up. The stoop went out of his shoulders; his chin lifted; eagerness entered his eyes.

"You know I can," he yelled in reply, his voice breaking oddly. "I can if she holds together. But this steamer's too big. If she's got any bottom in her now there won't be much left when she quits bumping on the middle ground. Where are we now?"

"Blunt's Reef lightship is a mile and a half west by south."

Johnson turned, glanced into the binnacle, then leaned over and through the wheel-house scuttle gave crisp orders for an altered course. Then he picked up a speaking tube.

"Chief, give her all she's got! Tie down the safety valves. Our only chance is to win a race to Humboldt, and it's up to you to win it for all of us! Understand?"

"I understand you're crazy," was the profane reply. "No vessel can get into Humboldt tonight. Say, who are you?"

"This is Steve Johnson—Midnight Johnson."

"The —— you say! I take back everything I said."

The click of the whistle snapping back into place at the lower end of the tube was the abrupt finish of the conversation. The chief had decided that this was no time for speech.

Soon an unaccustomed vibration ran through the steamer as she spurted ahead under forced draft. By this time Johnson stood alone on the bridge.

Mysteriously rumors of the seriousness of the mishap had spread among the passengers. To quiet their fears Lindstrom and the officers had gone below. Also they were carrying out Johnson's orders to remove the occupants from the starboard deck staterooms. Madison had retired to dress.

Steam pumps chugged frenziedly in a losing race with the rising water. The vessel was well bulkheaded, but this was no protection. Her bottom had been penetrated in nearly all the bulkhead sections.

Under forced draft, scurrying with the fury of the gale astern, the *Charlotte* logged close to twenty-one knots. For each mile gained to the northward, however, the sea crept in several inches on the pumps.

Gradually as the lightship dropped farther astern, the lumpiness of the ocean settled to gigantic swells, long and deep, their ugly, curling crests several hundred feet apart. Like hogback hills in regular succession they drove swiftly northward with the storm.

As the steamer slid down the long slope of a swell, her bow submarined deep until the buoyancy of the hull asserted itself. Up again came the prow, with hundreds of tons of water cascading back into the ocean from the bow and waist. At each plunge the stern momentarily lifted clear of the sea, and the twin screws raced wildly through the air until again they found solid water upon which to exert their powerful thrusts.

The chief engineer stood by to ease the engines as they raced. Cold sweat beaded his brow. To lose a propeller would be fatal.

Johnson was now in absolute command of the *Charlotte*; it was he who had set the compass course. Like a hawk he watched the needle in the binnacle light. Roundly he cursed the helmsman for the slightest deviation.

To run down a compass course on a black night from Blunt's Reef to the whistling buoy off Humboldt Bar is not necessarily difficult. But the leeway engendered by the grasp of the shrieking gale and racing seas made accuracy extremely problematical.

A bit of fine navigation was necessary; and Lindstrom, knowing Johnson to have been a master of the art, was only too glad to turn over the job. He himself that night had made one mistake too many.

Lindstrom returned to the bridge. Johnson spoke impatiently.

"I'm going to take the helm myself. Your seamen may be good, but not good enough for this job. They're too heavy-handed. Strong backs and weak heads! You come into the wheel-house later. You'd have to lash yourself if you stay here on the bridge when we get on the middle ground. We'll be going both under and over."

With that, Johnson ducked down one bridge companionway just as Madison came up the other. The president of the navigation company boiled with rage.

"The passengers are kicking!" he burst out. "What's this infernal nonsense of making them leave their staterooms and crowding into the social hall?"

"Let them kick!" answered Lindstrom. "It's only the starboard deck staterooms—and it's Johnson's orders."

"What in the pock-marked name of thunder has Johnson got to do with it?"

This is a censored version of Madison's inquiry.

"I've put our lives in his hands. He's in command."

"The heck he is! I won't stand for it!"

Overwrought with anxiety, his nerves on edge, Lindstrom blew up and cast aside all restraint. With glaring eyes he shook a briny wet fist beneath the other's nose.

"The —— you won't stand for it! You'll come up here, swear at me and tell me what to do, will you? Why, you fat-livered, fat-headed imitation of a chunk of general uselessness, get off the bridge before I throw you off. Midnight Johnson is in command, *and that goes!*"

Portions of this are likewise censored.

Lindstrom abruptly seized his employer, shoved him to the head of the companionway and allowed him to skid far from gently down the steps. Then, turning away from the bundle of apoplectic wrath at the foot of the stairs, Lindstrom barked another inquiry down a tube as to the height of water in the sounding-well. Forty minutes had passed since striking the reef.

"Six feet," was the ominous reply.

Lindstrom hurried down into the wheelhouse.

"There's six feet now," he announced.

"Lucky it isn't more," returned Johnson. "Tonight there's a seven-foot Spring tide on the bar—more than that with this wind. We'll be going in on just about the last of the flood—otherwise our chance would be lessened."

Johnson watched the compass and continued to nurse the wheel, intuitively swinging it a spoke or two either way in time to forestall a threatened deviation from the course. For a time there was no sound but the malevolent howl of the wind and the rush of water—water that battered and crashed like a thousand demons tumbling everywhere.

Upon entering the wheelhouse Johnson had lowered all the windows. The forward part of the steamer lay beneath his gaze. He noted that the bow now rose more sluggishly from each plunge; not much difference as yet, to be sure, but still an ugly portent of what was to come when the water had gained too much on the pumps.

"Douse all the forward lights," ordered Johnson. "I'll need the eyes of a cat tonight. A small glare may blind me enough to make the difference between life and death."

"I'll tend to it."

Lindstrom opened the starboard door and stepped out on to the windswept deck. A sudden gust tore the knob from his hand. The door banged shut with force sufficient to jar the structure.

FIFTEEN minutes passed. Lindstrom and the second officer were in the wheel-house. The other officers were busy allaying the fears of the passengers.

For over ten minutes Johnson had not spoken a word. Now he peered intently ahead. The two others peered likewise. They could see nothing but the blackness of a heaving waste as the bow again plunged deep. Ahead the limit of vision to them was less than fifty yards.

At times Johnson seemed to be listening. The others instinctively listened with him. They heard nothing but the fury of the gale, which had increased in violence. And apparently it had hauled around considerably to the eastward. The compass, if they had looked at it, would have told a different story.

Suddenly Johnson put the wheel hard to port, then reached for the engine-room telegraph. From one corner of his mouth he shouted a warning.

"Hold fast!"

Something like the black wall of a barn loomed high above the starboard rail, hung threateningly for a moment, and crashed aboard with a thunderous roar and a shock that made the steamer shiver in every plate and bolt. Immediately the wheel-house was flooded to the sills by solid streams of water pouring through the window openings.

Johnson, standing to his hips in water, hastily forced the helm up a couple of spokes, his gaze focused out in the murk. Lindstrom opened the lee door and allowed the water to empty from the room.

Momentarily Johnson relaxed from his rigid, apprehensive attitude. His mouth curved up in the old-time quirk.

"All five starboard boats gone and eleven stateroom doors smashed in. Count them afterward and see how far I missed the guess."

While speaking, Johnson never allowed his gaze to shift from straight ahead.

His figure again grew tense, vigilant.

"Hold fast!" he bawled out. "Here comes another."

"Good Lord! Where are we?" yelled Lindstrom.

"On the middle ground!"

And as if to prove the truth of the words another flooding, shocking sea smashed aboard.

"Eight more doors, I make it," grinned Johnson when the flood had passed. "Wait till the passengers get a look at them. They'll thank me for chasing them into the social hall."

"On the bar!"

Lindstrom seemed overcome with mystification.

"How—how in—" he gasped.

"I 'made' the whistling buoy all right," yelled Johnson. "It was still in the same old place. I'm heading in by compass till I can make the range lights."

The steamer rose on a huge sea, pitched abruptly and slid downward at a startling angle. She struck bottom with a jar and shock that sent the second officer off his feet to crash against the wall.

"Number one!" volunteered Johnson. "I told you she was too big. I got away with murder on the *Elk River* because she could almost float in a heavy dew."

Again and again terrific combers smashed over the steamer; time after time her keel thudded heavily on the bar. The only variation to this was afforded when she bumped bottom and took a tremendous sea aboard simultaneously, a combination trying to weak nerves.

Finally the middle ground was passed and she nosed between the jetties. Here the going was far easier, due to greater depth of water and the partial protection afforded by the remnants of the south jetty.

Shortly afterward the steamer, now lower in the water and sinking faster, due to the clogging of one of the steam pumps, was laboring northward on the sheltered bosom of Humboldt Bay. A speaking-tube screamed shrilly. Johnson answered. The chief engineer was speaking.

"Pick a soft spot," he announced. "The other pump is getting clogged, and the water is gaining like all —— in a hurry. The fires are half out now from the splash. I'll have to blow the boilers."

"All right, chief. Wait three minutes, then do your worst."

Johnson turned and gave an order to the seaman who had taken over the wheel. The steamer headed shoreward.

Two minutes later she slid on to a mudbank, stopping on a level keel with her bow less than two hundred yards from the edge of the smooth, sandy peninsula beach. And at that moment began the roar of escaping steam. The chief was blowing the boilers, in fear the steamer might take a sudden plunge toward the bottom of the shallow bay; the kiss of icy water on hot boilers would cause them to explode.

Johnson grinned at the sound.

"The chief needn't worry. We're sunk now, but she's sitting so sweet that if she wasn't eight or ten feet lower in the water you wouldn't know she was resting on the mud. We're safe, and I'm going to turn in."

"Bunk in with me," invited Lindstrom. "Holy sea-trout! Look at my hand. I'm shaking like the engines on the old *Elk River*. Come and have a drink?"

"Not on your life!" swore Johnson,

With a vigor that seemed suddenly to have stripped off its infirmities he continued:

"I've taken my last drink. In time, I'll prove that to Madison. Then all I'll have to prove is that I was not responsible for the disasters to the *Westland*. I believe I've figured out why she got wrecked—twice."

At that moment the wheel-house door opened to admit the purser, who immediately collapsed on to a locker seat, his face haggard with a yellow-green tinge. But he was game.

"Thunder!" he exploded weakly. "I've gone to sea for twelve years and I never knew what real seasickness was like until I took the thirty-third degree in crossing the bar tonight. About the passengers, captain—there's twenty or more of the starboard staterooms that are in no condition to be occupied. All flooded out—doors smashed in.

"Mr. Madison insisted upon remaining in his room. He hasn't a dry stitch of clothing to put on. He wants to borrow some from you."

At that, Lindstrom laughed. His employer must have forgotten or forgiven the scene on the bridge, and its sudden termination.

"Take anything necessary out of my room," he answered. "And have the stewards put up the passengers as best they can."

The purser arose and staggered out of the room.

"Let's get some sleep," suggested Johnson. "There's nothing to do till daylight."

"Not a thing," agreed Lindstrom. "Except to get out of these wet duds. Let's go."

EARLY the following morning came a knock on the door of Lindstrom's cabin. Lindstrom awoke and replied—

"Come in!"

Madison entered. Crossing the room, he held out his hand to Johnson.

"Captain Johnson, I want to thank you for last night's work. You were right in removing the passengers from their rooms. I had a demonstration of just how right you were.

"And to Captain Lindstrom I owe an apology. He forced me off the bridge, and I believe I had it coming."

Both mariners grinned at each other, as if to say—

"By golly, he's human after all."

And there was added respect in their way of grasping Madison's hand.

"To get down to business," resumed Madison. "I've wirelessed the *Westland*, which left San Francisco late yesterday. She's to put in here on her way north and pick up the *Charlotte's* passengers. She'll arrive somewhere around three o'clock. The gale blew out before daylight, and the bar will have calmed down enough by the time the *Westland* gets here."

"The *Westland!*" exclaimed Johnson. "And she'll try to cross the bar between three and four this afternoon? Mr. Madison, as sure as she tries it she'll get wrecked in the same manner that she twice came to grief when I was in command. Don't let Captain Ingells bring her in until after six o'clock."

"Why six o'clock?" returned Madison. "It'll be dark then. I want to transfer the passengers by daylight."

"I said six o'clock because the tide turns at five-thirty. She can't come in on an ebb tide."

"Nonsense!" snorted the other. "If the bar is smooth enough, Captain Ingells will come right into the bay."

With that Madison left the room.

"Shivering Moses!" groaned Johnson. "After the way he came clean a minute ago I was beginning to have hopes for him. But he's just as bull-headed as ever. I'm going to warn Ingells."

"Well," said Lindstrom, "it's a primary rule of navigation that to play safe one should not enter a harbor on an ebb tide. But it's being done all the time. What makes you so certain that if the *Westland* tries it she will get into trouble?"

"I tried it twice on an ebb tide with the *Westland*. I ought to know."

Lindstrom smiled uncertainly, then began to lather his face for the morning shave.

It was just before noon when Madison, a sheet of paper in hand, angrily confronted Johnson.

"What does this mean? I have a wireless from Captain Ingells inquiring about your warning for him not to cross the bar until six o'clock."

"I wirelessed him a warning," acknowledged Johnson. "I don't want to see him get the short end of the stick like I did. Didn't last night convince you that I know Humboldt Bar?"

"Certainly," said Madison. "That is, to a certain extent," he added.

"Then the blood is on your own head if you won't accept my experience and knowledge. An ebb tide will wreck the *Westland*. Again I'm warning you."

"Rats!" snorted Madison. Shortly afterward he wirelessed Captain Ingells this message:

> If bar is not too rough, enter bay without delay. Pay no attention to Johnson's message. Responsibility will be wholly mine.

In the meantime Lindstrom pressed Johnson for further information as to why the *Westland* might meet disaster.

"That's for Madison to find out," was Johnson's savage retort. "He'd laugh at my theory, and, by ——, I'm going to let it be proven first and explain it to him afterward. That's the only way to convince him. He knows it all—or thinks he does, which to him is the same thing. He came clean that I was right about the staterooms because he got convinced—with cold salt water, and plenty of it.

"I'll slip word to the towboat captain to stand by and pull the *Westland* off the rocks. She won't get damaged — beyond salvage. But she'll be laid up for repairs, and that'll hit Madison where he lives—in the pocketbook. It'll make him willing to listen to me when I warn him in the future. I feel sorry for Captain Ingells, though. I'll do my best to square it for him."

"But Ingells knows Humboldt Bar."

"Yes, but he doesn't know how the *Westland* will act on a Humboldt ebb tide. I was the last man who tried to take her in."

Johnson, hands thrust deep into his pockets, stalked moodily away.

AT THREE-THIRTY that afternoon the *Westland* "made" the whistling buoy, three-quarters of a mile to seaward from the end of the south jetty. An eighth of a mile shoreward from the buoy was the treacherous middle ground.

Captain Ingells had been rendered more than duly cautious by Midnight Johnson's warning. He sized up the middle ground, decided it could be crossed safely through the north channel and ordered the *Westland* to proceed at half-speed.

Through his binoculars he carefully scanned the waters between the jetties. Nothing to fear there, he decided. The bar was calm, considering its reported behavior for the last few days. Therefore once across the middle ground Captain Ingells felt his worries would be ended. Blithely he headed in between the jetties.

Three minutes later he became acutely aware that something was wrong. The *Westland*, though steaming straight ahead, ably breasting the swiftly ebbing tide, seemed to skid toward the sunken granite blocks of the south jetty.

"Starboard the helm!" was Ingells' hasty, frantic order.

The steamer refused to answer. Instead of sheering off toward the center of the channel, the bow if anything veered slightly nearer the jetty. A quick signal to the engine-room helped not at all. The steamer was helpless in the grasp of a rip tide. Alternate forward and reverse signals for the engine combined with desperate jockeying of the wheel failed to bring the vessel under control.

Fifteen seconds later despite all efforts she struck beam on as she came down from the rise of a swell. Lifting again on a sea, she crunched a second time against the jagged boulders.

Less than a quarter of a mile away, black smoke belching from her stack, "a bone in her teeth," the tug *Ranger* steamed to the rescue. Her efficient crew wasted no time, Within ten minutes she was snaking the *Westland* into the harbor. The salvaged craft was leaking badly, in addition to losing her rudder and knocking off the blades of her propeller against the rocks.

As a final touch to Madison's wounded self-esteem, the crippled, sinking *Westland* was deposited on the mud-flat within a hundred yards of the *Charlotte*.

Within an hour a conference was held, at Johnson's request, aboard the *Charlotte*. Seated around a dining-table were Johnson, Madison, Lindstrom and Ingells. Johnson arose and spoke.

"Gentlemen, when I say there are some thirty or so square miles of tidal area in Humboldt Bay you may think I am not sticking to my promise of explaining why the *Westland* went on the jetty. Those wide miles of tide-water are responsible.

"When the tide ebbs, all this water has to find its way seaward through the narrow entrance. The tides from Arcata Bay and the northern channels meet at the entrance with the tide from South Bay, causing tremendous rip tides and a deadly undertow. The latter would not trouble most ships. The tug went right in and threw a line aboard the *Westland*.

"The tug's shallow draft left her untouched by the deeper rip currents. It was the same way with the old *Elk River*; I could enter safely at almost any time.

"But the *Westland* is built wrong; she is too deep in her draft. Her keel and rolling chocks are close to the bottom when on Humboldt Bar with the tide low. The strong undertow therefore gets a good grip on her. And her rudder is far too small.

"Some peculiarity in the lines of her hull may have more to do with her being caught in a way that makes her disregard her helm when in a tide rip. She may be able to enter any other harbor on the coast, on an ebb tide even, but Humboldt ebbs are too much for her.

"Mr. Madison, this is a plea for Captain Ingells. I warned him, and he would have heeded me. He obeyed your orders—and wrecked his vessel. 'Obey orders even though you bankrupt owners' is the unwritten law of the sea. And often it is by simply obeying orders that a master stands in danger of having his license—his meal-ticket—revoked.

"I was heeding your warning to make time and save money when twice I tried to take the *Westland* into Humboldt on an ebb tide. Are you going to give Captain Ingells a square deal?"

"You bet I am," answered Madison. "I can fix it with the inspectors so that he won't even get a thirty-day suspension. He stays on the payroll while the *Westland* undergoes repairs."

"And have I shown you, convinced you, that my theory about the *Westland's* disasters is correct?"

"Jumping Jupiter, yes!" agreed Madison. "If you get any more theories in the future that are liable to be as expensive to prove as this one, I may be willing to believe you."

" 'May be willing' is probably correct," grinned Johnson. "The only way to convince you is with a club—or sea-water."

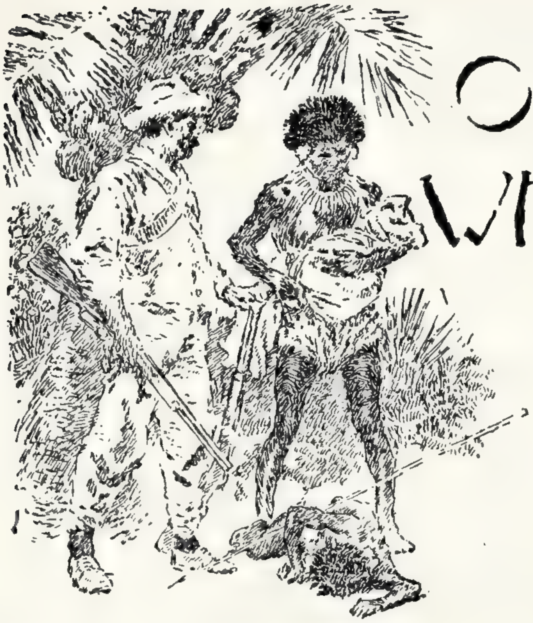
Madison smiled feebly.

"Don't rub it in," he protested. "I hope I'm cured. And by the way, I'm afraid Captain Lindstrom will have to bear the penalty for striking Blunt's Reef. The commissioners will certainly revoke his license.

"When the *Charlotte* comes out of dry-dock she'll have a new master. Midnight Johnson is elected for the berth."

"That makes it unanimous. Thank you, Mr. Madison," said the newly created master of the *Charlotte*. "And I want Lindstrom for my first officer. Any objections?"

"None at all. He's a good seaman. I'm glad you want him. And besides—" Madison grinned—"if I objected, he would think it was because he threw me off the bridge last night."



ONE LONE WHITE MAN

by Albert Richard Wetjen

HE WAS a magnificent figure of a man. The glow of the setting sun tinged his golden skin to a richer hue, and the pink of the evening sky, against which he was silhouetted, made him appear bigger and broader than he really was. He stood rigid for a moment on the crest of a little knoll, looking back the way he had come. Then he turned and entered the dense grove of coco-palms that clung to the gentle slope leading to the beach.

Before him sounded the croon of the surf, as the long glassy swells of the Pacific broke in creamy whiteness along the shore. Behind him the jungle lisped and murmured in the heat of the dying day. Thousands of terns and frigate-birds, swooping, wheeling and quarreling overhead, burst at frequent intervals into hideous croakings. From the grove itself came the low cooing of the red-crested pigeons.

For all that the native traveled fast and that the path through the grove was a well-beaten one, it took him nearly half-an-hour to reach the clearing wherein was set the little house of the trader, and the long, low shed where the trade was stored. Both buildings had been erected on the shores of the only good natural harbor on that part of the coast, with a view to giving the infrequent trading-schooner every protection from the swell and every facility for quick loading and unloading of cargo.

The grove straggled on past the buildings, getting thinner and thinner, until it ran to the very edge of the white coral sand, sweeping in an easy slope of smooth softness to where the surf laughed and whispered. The blue waters of the harbor were embraced by two rocky points that ran down from the hills of the hinterland and about a mile into the sea, ending in a series of slivered reefs over which the foam boiled in the calmest weather.

Naked, except for a scarlet loin-cloth and a few beads suspended from his neck, and with scarlet hibiscus-blossoms stuck rakishly behind his ears, the native padded up to the veranda of the house and halted before the white man who idly sat on the steps smoking a long cheroot and attired in thin silk pajamas.

The trader was a short and stocky figure, with sandy sun-bleached hair, and eyes of the deepest blue, showing startlingly vivid in the deep tan of the cheeks. He might have been anything from thirty to forty, and from the steady set of the square jaw and the narrowed keen look of the eyes, he was a man who had seen and done much. On the steps near him lay a heavy belt and revolver-holster that he had evidently just unbuckled and placed there. He never had his hand far from a gun.

The native dropped to his haunches and eyed the white man anxiously. He spoke in the Samoan tongue, but it was apparent it was not the speech he had learned at his mother's knee.

"It is war, *papalagi.** I have looked into the villages of Karea and I found the tree-drums beating. Tomorrow Karea marches against Lu."

The white man grunted and removed his cheroot from his mouth for a moment. "And Lu?" he asked.

"He, too, holds revel."

The white man resorted to English to relieve his feelings."

"——! And so all trade is finished for a while. I have not a hundred sacks of copra yet, and the *Alice* is due—let's see—two months today."

The *Alice* was the little trading-schooner that was supposed to call bi-yearly or so and pick up what cargo the trader had managed to gather.

There was a slight scuffling noise and both men turned their heads curiously, to see a native rising from the ground near the house, where he had evidently been sleeping. He cast one wild glance on the trader, his eyeballs starting from his head with excitement, then he was off, running toward the little compound deeper in the grove where the native-laborers the trader employed were quartered.

As he ran he emitted a low throbbing scream that drowned for a moment the murmur of the jungle and the surf. His body glistened redly between the scaly palm-trunks in the fading light, his oily hair shone, and his bone ornaments rattled. Then he vanished.

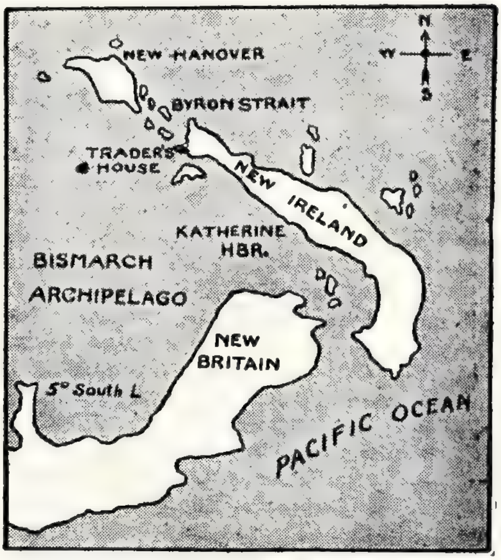
The white man spat disgustedly.

"He heard what you said, Maru. He's gone to tell the others, and in the morning we shall find ourselves all alone. The laborers'll all want to be in the coming scrap."

The native grinned and lit the cheroot the trader offered him. He was from the Marquesas, and like most of the people of the pleasant, dreaming valley islands he was disinclined for work and fighting, though he could do both quite well when it became imperative. He, too, spat in the direction the fleeing native had taken.

THAT night the trader and the Marquesan cleaned up their rifles. They had three between them, one a high-power sporting-rifle, and two Winchester repeaters. They loaded them all very carefully, and did the same with the revolvers that were ordinarily left hanging from convenient nails to be handy in case of necessity. The trader turned in under his mosquito-netting at last, feeling rather angry with the world in general.

He was the only white man on that part of the New Ireland coast, and ordinarily had things pretty much his own way. He drew the wealth of a large area into his store-shed, and having no competitors he made his own scale of prices to be paid in trade-goods. The threatening war was likely to put him out of business for some time, for native wars frequently drag on for monotonously long periods, and little is ever done except feasting and dancing, and occasionally a raid to collect a few heads or women; it all depends on how many of the young bucks are unmarried and wish to give their fellows an example of their prowess.



The trouble which worried the trader had started, like most wars, over a woman. A man of the interior tribes had carried off a woman of the coast-people. In the ordinary course of events the matter could have been arranged without any trouble, and the loving couple joined together without any empty or hollow display. But the abducted woman happened to be the favorite wife of Karea, who was the big king of the lives and destinies of some half-a-dozen of the larger coast villages.

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*Foreigner

Whether it was the loss of his pretty woman that made him angry, or whether it was really the opportunity he saw in the overt act to make an excusable raid into the interior and clean up things in general, will never be known. Sufficient it is that Karea roused his people and set the war-drums beating.

Three nights after the abduction Karea marched on Loaan and wiped it from the memory of man, driving some hundreds of women and children into captivity and putting the male defenders to the sword, the same being of sharks' teeth.

This had naturally hurt the feelings of Lu, who was as great a king over some half-a-dozen of the big interior villages, as was Karea over his coast-people. Loaan was Lu's largest village, or had been, and besides the matter had become a thing of personal honor, for Karea had taken with Loaan a pile of smoked heads that had taken Lu many years to collect. Lu sent forth his runners, and bade the women sound upon the hollow tree-drums. The war was on.

Now all this would not have mattered a brass button to the trader, except for the fact of his business being temporarily stopped, had not two runners arrived at his house practically simultaneously. They came with the early dawn, the morning after the Marquesan had told his master of the outbreak of war, and they came in haste, panting and sweating with their exertions.

They met before the trader's veranda and waited for him to appear, glaring and snarling at each other. That they did not fight was because fighting was tabu on the trader's ground, a tabu backed by a Winchester rifle, which the natives duly appreciated.

The trader was much embarrassed, for he guessed the messengers' errand. He called the Marquesan to him and ordered food and drink to be served to the messenger of Karea, while he led Lu's man to the far end of the veranda out of earshot.

Sullenly Karea's man watched them talking together, noted the eloquent gestures of the native, saw the white man shake his head, the native get angry and then threatening, the white man cold and brusque, and finally angry himself. Karea's man began to grin. As Lu's man passed him, loping off toward the jungle that lay beyond the surrounding grove, he shook with noiseless laughter and poked out his tongue. Lu's man stopped and scowled with a bitter exclamation.

"Pig!" he shouted, showing his teeth.

Karea's man bounded to his feet and raised his war club.

"Pig!" he screamed.

Both natives took up spectacular attitudes, grimacing and threateningly snarling at each other.

"Maru!" The trader spoke sharply to the Marquesan as he watched the byplay.

The Marquesan grinned and took down a ray-tail whip from a nail in one of the veranda posts. At the first cut he laid open the back of Lu's messenger, causing him to spring away hurriedly and forget all about his opponent.

"Beat it!" roared the trader, and the native broke for the jungle. Karea's man started his huge silent laughter again as he watched his rival disappear, until the ray-whip cut into his thighs. Then he ceased laughing and glared at Maru.

"Come here!" The native looked at the trader quickly, noted the hand resting on the Colt-butt, and then his club sank to the ground. He came sullenly forward. Maru hung up the whip and stood watching his master, his hand fondling the handle of the Malay kris that protruded from his scarlet loin-cloth.

Karea's man delivered the message he had brought, and then the same pantomime was gone through as had been with Lu's man. It ended by the trader kicking the native off the place altogether, and hastening him with a shot above his head. The trader looked serious when he returned, and sitting on the veranda steps he lit the inevitable cheroot.

"We're in bad now, Maru," he said slowly. "Karea thinks I ought to let him have rifles and ammunition for the sake of his friendship, and Lu has precisely the same notion. Each king sends a sort of veiled threat that he will come and take what he wants if it is refused. Well, let 'em. We'll show 'em!"

Maru did not fully understand all the trader said, but he gathered the general drift of the talk and nodded gravely.

"If they do raid me, either of them, I can't hold out for long. There ought to be some way to stop this war—or—something."

"What of the Little People?" murmured Maru suggestively.

The trader shook his head.

"They are friends to no one, and I doubt whether they would go to war for my sake. They have never gone fighting this side of the ravine."

There was a long silence as the white man and the brown pondered the problem of how to keep alive in the midst of ten thousand warriors who were hostile and religiously believed that a smoked head was the highest prize possible for a brave man to obtain.

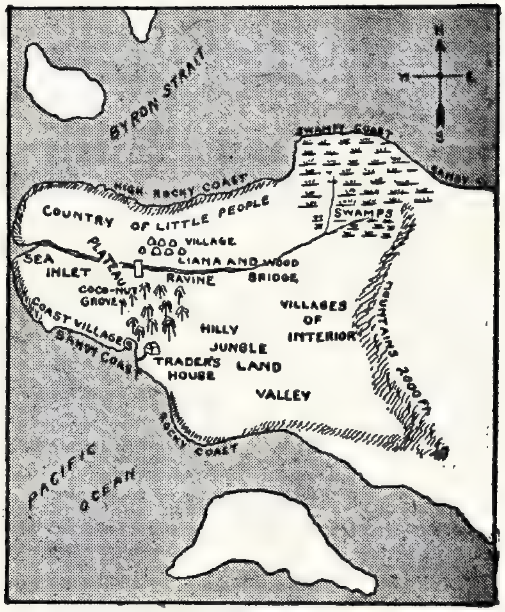
THE Little People were one of those mysteries that ethnologists sometimes run up against. They were not of the islanders, they were strictly not of the Pacific Islands at all. Their nearest relatives, from a cranial standpoint, and the standpoint of culture, were the Australian bushmen. They were not over five feet in height, were phallic worshipers, used poisoned weapons, and were reputed to be cannibals. They were fierce and warlike when attacked, but never by any chance entered into wars of aggression or extension.

They hated the ordinary islander and were in turn feared and hated. It is possible that they had drifted into New Ireland in those far-off days when Australasia was one vast continent, before the great cataclysm came and split the land masses into isolated islands.

The country of the Little People was rather curiously situated. A narrow inlet of the sea ran inland for nearly six miles, and then turned and ran parallel with the coast for nearly two miles, before narrowing into a deep ravine that ran out into a huge mangrove and sago swamp, extending to the very mountains that fringed the coast further on.

Shut in on one side by the sea and a rocky coast, on another by the ravine, and another by the more or less impassable swamp, the Little People retained their original characteristics and took no part in the general life of the island. They rarely ventured outside of their domains, and only did so when in need of meat, which was rather scarce in their own country. Their usual way of exit was by a fragile bridge that spanned the ravine just where it changed from the sea inlet.

The bridge was skilfully woven of jungle lianas, strengthened with wood, and with a liana hand-rail for the nervous. On both sides of the ravine, where the bridge ran, the jungle sloped away to the beach and the sea on one side, and on the other to a rich hilly valley that ran for some miles until it reached the foothills of the distant mountains.



On the rare occasions the Little People did cross the ravine into the valley, they hunted in parties of three or four and interfered with none, unless they were first interfered with. Occasionally some young bucks of the islanders would endeavor to capture a head, and they would usually be found soon after their attempt strangely swollen and distorted, while the Little People would have vanished back across their fragile bridge.

None of the valley people had ever crossed that bridge. It was said that long before, and at various periods, three great kings had led forces into the Little People's country. They never came back. Nothing was ever heard of them again. The only unusual thing noticed was the smoke of many cooking-fires above the tree-tops across the ravine.

Once the trader had found one of the Little People caught in a wild-pig trap and had set him free and doctored his ragged wounds. The native had become separated from his companions. He failed to understand why they had not returned to look for him, and aided by the trader commenced to search. They had found little headless bodies in a nearby thicket, and the hunter of the Little People had returned across the ravine alone.

The trader's kindness to one of their number had never been forgotten by the strange tribes, and they showed their gratitude by leaving him alone whenever they happened to meet him out hunting. Occasionally little presents of fowls and sucking-pigs were left in the night on his veranda, and though mostly eaten by night prowlers, they were much appreciated by the trader's laborers. The trader knew, though, that the friendship of the Little People would not go any further for him. Maru's suggestion that they would aid him to fight off both Karea and Lu was of little use. He could hardly expect a small nation to go to war for his sake, just because he had done a kindness to one of their number.

But the suggestion of the Marquesan gave the trader food for thought. A grim little smile came to his lips as he began to see a ray of light through the darkness. There was a chance, just a bare chance, that the Little People could be made use of. He hated to draw them into a war that was none of their making, but he was a lone white man in a howling savage country, where he could only expect to exist by his wits and his superior white man's reason.

He spoke softly to Maru, drawing that worthy down on the veranda steps beside him, and what he said set the Marquesan grinning and chuckling deep in his throat.

* * *

TWENTY-FOUR hours later a band of some fifty natives swept through the grove and on to the trader's house. The trader was on the porch, in a long cane-chair this time, smoking moodily and gazing out to sea. Far off on the horizon a black smudge of smoke lifted and fell, as some trading-steamer felt a cautious way to the north. She was too far off to receive signals, even if there had been time to send any.

A shower of spears whined across the clearing and the attacking natives broke cover. The trader leaped up and threw his rifle to his shoulder. He had never had it far from his hand since the visit paid by the messengers of Karea and Lu. He fired with astonishing rapidity and seemingly without aim. Yet hardly a shot missed its mark. Not for nothing had he lived ten years in the South Seas. Five men were down before the natives halted and dropped to earth. The fierce war cries ceased, and there commenced a stealthy forward movement, the attackers taking advantage of every tree-stump, and every tuft of grass and coral.

Another rifle began to speak. Calmly and without haste the bullets seemed to snicker around the creeping figures, ever and anon finding a billet. Up among the rafters of the house, his rifle poking through a hole in the roof, Maru was enjoying himself immensely.

In a radius of about forty yards from the house, with a break only where the trade-store stood, was painted on the ground a white circle. One hardly noticed it until raised above the ground level, so well it seemed to blend with the film of coral-sand that had drifted up from the beach.

Coolly the trader reloaded his rifle and eyed the creeping band. With a little tingle he noted that the grass-tufts were quivering within the white circle, and he caught sight of a dark body as it slithered ghost-like between wide apart palms. He stepped inside the house door out of sight, waited until he heard the yell that betokened the rush, and then jammed down a lever.

There were three terrific explosions, almost simultaneous. The house rocked a little and a picture on the wall of one of the back rooms fell with a crash. When the smoke had cleared not a native was to be seen, save four who lay very still on the ragged edges of three shallow craters in the soft earth.

The trader chuckled, and flinging his rifle into the crook of his arm he stepped forth to see the results of his defenses. Maru joined him, grinning, a few moments later.

"Dynamite is a wonderful thing," observed the trader thoughtfully. "Especially when connected with a few batteries. I knew that old launch engine would come in handy some day."

After the Marquesan had disposed of the four bodies that lay near the house, by the simple process of dragging them farther into the grove, he set to work to replant the three exploded mines.

The trader brought a gramophone out on the veranda and held a concert, with only the Marquesan and a few curious terns, and a mocking-bird as an appreciative audience.

THE first attack had been made by Karea's men. Lu's men made the next attempt on the trader and on the wealth of rifles that lay in the store-shed. The second attack was not so openly carried out. Whereas Karea had honored the white man by sending fifty warriors against him, Lu committed the indiscretion of sending three picked men to dispose of him while another party of two hundred waited in the jungle for the call that would tell them to come in and collect the loot.

The trader spent the time after dark and until the moon rose walking around the house with Maru, and after moonrise he retired to the veranda to doze a little, while the Marquesan kept a sleepy watch from the vantage-post among the rafters.

In spite of appearances the trader was not careless of his defense that he chose to sleep so. He had a system of alarms rigged that could not fail to wake him, and secure in that knowledge he dozed peacefully on.

The moon had been up nearly two hours before Lu's three men made a serious move. They went entirely round the house and came up from the seaward side. Standing about fifty yards from the house, a fringe of palms, the last of the grove, protected the house on this side from any wind or storm that might race up the little harbor. Immediately beyond the fringe the naked beach commenced, dazzling white beneath the moon.

Against the sand the three dark bodies showed plainly. Unseen, however, they reached the palm-fringe, and from there the cover was more or less plentiful. Palms straggled inland, past the house and store, until the denser grove was reached.

No sooner had the first native wriggled clear of the fringe than he became tangled up in a trip-line. With a staccato report a shot-gun went off, then another and another. One of the natives must have got in the way of a charge for he leaped upright with a scream, and with his back burning like fire he ran for dear life back to the beach again. The other scared men hastily followed him.

Maru, awakened from his half-slumber, clambered over the rafters to the beach side of the house, where from his loophole he had a splendid view of the three figures running along the beach. He nestled comfortably down to his gun-butt and took aim. He missed the first two shots and wondered why. Then he decided the moonlight was deceptive and shifted his muzzle a little higher. His next shot brought down the leading native, evidently hit in the leg, for he jumped up again and limped on.

The three men were now moving parallel with the house, and making for the brush that shouldered out on the beach nearly two hundred yards away. The trader was on the veranda but could not fire because of the fringe of palms that hindered his view. He caught glimpses of the white beach through the trunks as he moved, and occasional flickers of the running figures.

Maru commenced to fire again, aiming still higher. He was using the sporting-rifle and the range was a little short, for the shots went a trifle low, while the moonlight made the target appear very near. His first shot however brought down the limping man, the second missed, so did the third. The fourth caught the two survivors in line and bowled them both over, the one on the far side getting up immediately and running on. Maru picked him off at leisure, and the beach was deserted once more, except for three huddled heaps that stained the virgin whiteness.

Later the crabs found the bodies, and the heaps appeared to writhe and lift and move.

Back in the jungle Lu's two hundred men waited and waited for the call to loot. They waited till the false dawn paled the sky and then they followed their chief, Furii, to see what was the matter.

It so happened that Karea, hearing how badly his band had been defeated, and being aroused from sleep to be told the news, had gathered his army in mighty wrath and started to march in person on the trader's house and store.

For long the king had coveted the rich goods in the store, and for much longer the cases of rifles and ammunition that meant the balance of power in northern New Ireland for whoever possessed them in sufficient quantity. Wherefore it was with some such dreams as the little Corsican must have had that Karea jog-trotted at the head of his warriors to crush the single white man who had for so long defied him.

Lu's two hundred men, creeping through the grove, were suddenly aware of a mighty rustling on their flank, and of a dull murmuring from many lips. One of their outposts caught sight of an outpost of Karea's army, and with a yell went into action. The noise of the combat brought dozens from both sides, mutual recognition ensued, and a battle commenced in the heart of the grove. The white man was forgotten.

Lu's men were unaware that they were opposed to the whole of Karea's army, while Karea himself thought he had run into the whole of Lu's array. With much difficulty he drew off his men. Lu's men withdrew also and camped restlessly some half a mile from their foes. Messengers were sent to Lu, and at the first flush of the real dawn he was on the march with the rest of his army. In the meantime a few of the hotter-headed bucks prowled between the two camps eager for heads and glory.

A little judicious scouting on the part of Maru had given the trader an idea how things stood. He was displeased that the fighting was to take place so near him. It would mean sleepless nights for him until the blood-lust had died down, which would not be for some time. He knew also that if he elected to go in with one king or the other with his dynamite-sticks and rifles, he could end the whole conflict in a few hours. But he dared not. If he aided Lu, Karea would remember and so would Karea's people. There would be half the trade gone. The same state of things would ensue if he went in and aided Karea. Lu would remember and so would Lu's people. It was a case of being between the devil and the deep sea.

The trader called Maru to him.

"It is time our plan was tried," he said. "We must leave the house unguarded unfortunately, but we can rig up trip-lines to some mines. That ought to scare any prowlers away. Yes, I think it can be managed. Get what you want and we'll start.'

Half an hour later they set out. The trader carried two rifles, and two bandoliers were slung across his shoulders. His pockets were crammed with dynamite-sticks, each ready for firing with a fuse split and cut short, and with the live end of a match inserted. A mere touch of a glowing cigar-butt would set them off. Maru carried several yards of fine cord and a sack. Weapons, other than his usual Malay kris, he had none.

It took the two till noon to negotiate a cautious way to the ravine, beyond which lay the country of the Little People. Several times they had to crouch low in the underbrush to let a hastily traveling party of Karea's or Lu's men go by chattering excitedly. Once they had to lie in cover and watch a fight when two of these parties met. But eventually they reached the ravine without either side knowing they had left the house and store unguarded.

Far below they could see the smoke of fires rising above the jungle like pale blue serpents, curling and winding until lost in the rarer air of the heights. The fires showed that the armies had not yet closed.

The trader knew that it would not be long before the young bucks would fly into action, the chiefs unable to restrain them and follow up any settled plan. There would develop in the end, as there always did in savage wars, nothing but a general mêlée in which the side that kept at it longest would win.

Maru became a little uneasy as the trader crossed the fragile bridge ahead of him. It was quite possible that sharp eyes were watching them venture on the tabued ground, that strong fingers were tensed to throw the poisoned-spear. One could not help remembering the three great kings who had, in the past, led armies across the bridge and never returned.

The calm indifference of the white man gave the brown man courage. While the trader held that caution was at all times necessary, his Anglo-Saxon blood gave him that inimitable air of contempt for danger, and that self-confident swagger that has carried the white man round the world and far into the strongholds of the most savage peoples.

Maru felt vastly braver as he watched his master, and something of the swagger settled on his own shoulders.

FROM the bridge a well-beaten path ran into the jungle that lay on the very lip of the ravine waiting to engulf them, murmuring, reeking and hot. What lay behind the green wall and beyond the narrow pathway no man knew.

The trader hesitated for a moment, looked back the way he had come, looked ahead again, and then followed his look. He walked very softly, his finger on the trigger and every sense alert. For some two hundred yards the path led in a gentle slope downward, the undergrowth and trees hemming it in closely. Then it commenced to drop abruptly, continued to do so for another three hundred yards or more, and then leveled up.

The jungle thinned out and merged into a park-like land intersected with little streams and rolling hillocks. The sea could be seen beyond the rocky cliffs in the distance, a wide expanse of laughing blue shimmering in the sunlight.

The trader halted, and with a bound found cover in the brush. No less quick was Maru, for full ahead lay a large village through which the pathway continued and ran. Women were moving about in large numbers, evidently engaged in cooking the noonday meal, and here and there a man could be seen attending to his weapons, or lying idly in the shade under a tree. Near to where the trader crouched a little spring bubbled up out of the ground and chattered away down to the village, to settle in a little lake far below, before narrowing to a river, joining with other streams, and running into the sea.

So far the two adventurers had met no one, but coming straight toward them up the pathway were four of the Little People, three of them men and the other a woman. They were evidently bound on a hunting expedition, and the woman, beside bending nearly double under a heavy bundle of what looked like skins, also carried a heavy sling, and a skin-pouch full of stones at her girdle. All were stark naked, and grotesquely tattooed.

There was a shout from the village, rising above the murmur of the voices, and the oncoming party halted and looked back. A woman came to the edge of the low huts and shouted something in harsh gutturals, apparently to the effect that the party had forgotten something, for two of the men after a brief consultation hurried back, while the other man and the woman came on.

The trader sighed with relief, for he had thought they had been discovered. He grew tense again as he saw his opportunity. He whispered to Maru, who nodded and crept silently from his side, a little way nearer the village.

In silence the two descendants of the earth's childhood came on, the man leading the woman by some dozen yards or more, his eyes bent on the ground and his long throwing-spear dangling carelessly from his hand. They drew level and passed the crouching two, and went on. Some subtle instinct, perhaps some sixth sense, such as all wild creatures possess, told the man that something was the matter, that everything was not as it should be.

He suddenly halted, tensed, and sniffed at the air like a dog. A low mutter of surprize escaped his lips as his eyes fell on the deep track in the soft earth of the pathway, where the trader's boot had dug deep as he leaped for cover. The man commenced to turn around, and at the same instant the trader caught him under the ear with a gun-butt.

Maru leaped on the woman, jerked the load from her head, knocked her down with one sweeping blow and hurriedly drew the sack he carried over her head. A few turns of cord round it, and shouldering the load he set off up the pathway at a run. The trader rapidly followed, leaving the man where he had fallen.

For a moment there was tense silence. The very life-throb of the jungle seemed to cease. Only could be heard the pad-pad of naked feet and shoes on the dried earth. Then rose from the village below such a howl as the panther makes when he scents his prey, before he falls into the silent way of his stalking.

The blood of the trader ran cold for a moment, and hastily twisting as he went forward he saw, before he turned a bend in the path, a dense crowd of the Little People, clustered between the huts, gazing up at him in astonishment and rage. Then he vanished from their sight, and the blank walls of the jungle met his startled gaze.

There was a mad rush on the part of the villagers for weapons. There is hardly a crime so bad among a phallic-worshiping people as woman-stealing. It was unheard-of besides for strangers to tread the sacred ground of the coast and live. Signal-fires sprang up from the most unlikely places, and the Little People came pouring from all sides to recapture the woman—who was communal property—and to avenge the insult that had been offered.

Hardly feeling his burden Maru swept sure-footed over the rocking, quivering bridge and, after running some little way down the beaten path on the other side of the ravine, plunged aside into the jungle.

He knew just what to do. Everything had been prepared and planned beforehand. He was the decoy, or rather the woman he bore was. He ran on, stumbling over outthrust roots and low entwined creepers. His face was brushed by harsh-skinned lianas, and the petals of a thousand flowers pelted his shoulders and marked his pathway. He left a trail that a blind man could have followed.

On, on he ran, never ceasing, and never losing his sense of direction, until at last, breathing easily, he slowed to a walk and his movements became those of the native hunter. He hardly left any trail and the noise he made was not. Far behind he heard the crack of a rifle and then the hoarse boom of dynamite. He grinned a little.

Presently he came to the beach and followed the sand-edge for perhaps a mile, until he reached the trader's house without having seen anything of the men of the opposing armies.

He kept on past the house for about a quarter of a mile until he came to where a high outcrop of rock ran into the sea and formed one of the arms of the harbor. He made his way to a well-hidden cave, screened by some bushes, and deposited his burden there. He dragged off the sack and bound the woman securely, making an effective gag out of a piece of his loin-cloth. Then he went back the way he had come.

IN THE meantime the trader was busy. He had halted on the edge of the ravine until the first of the Little People came loping into view. A few shots of his rifle—he fired above their heads—sent them scuttling to cover and to debate. He backed warily on to the bridge, still swaying from Maru's hurried crossing, and crossed to the other side of the ravine. He listened to the sounds of Maru's progress and was well satisfied. The main thing was to give the Marquesan time.

The trader settled himself in the jungle and covered the bridge with his rifle. A few spears whistled near, but as the throwers dared not break cover to take aim they were futile, and an occasional shot from the rifle kept the throwers well hidden.

Waiting until he judged Maru to have started on the way back, the trader rose cautiously to his feet. He had already lit a cigar, and now he proceeded to toss a few sticks of dynamite across the ravine with a view to scaring throughly those on the other side.

He heard a crashing in the jungle as the sticks went off, most of them falling down the aching space under the bridge, and he chuckled grimly. The Little People were drawing off.

Silent as a ghost, so silent that the trader nearly shot him, Maru stepped out of the jungle at his side.

"It is done," he said calmly, and took the spare rifle from the trader's shoulders.

The Marquesan grinned as his gaze wandered to the other side of the ravine, deserted and hazy through the dynamite fumes.

"I think," said the trader slowly, "we can be moving."

As noiselessly as possible he backed off into the jungle, and turning led the way where he could strike the path out of sight of the bridge. Making his way to where Maru had driven a broad swath into the brush he took from his pocket a large bag of tin-tacks. Several handfuls of the tiny spikes he scattered about in places some yards from each other, and returning to the beaten path again he repeated the process.

"That'll hold them for a bit," he muttered, and pocketing the bag he started off along the path toward the beach.

Occasionally he looked back, but it was not with apprehension, it seemed rather with glee. Perhaps he was thinking of the tin-tacks. Maru, too, was grinning.

Keeping a wary lookout for the armies of Karea and Lu, the two men made their way back to the house on the shore of the harbor, finding that nothing had been disturbed, though one of the shot-guns had gone off, evidently with disastrous effect, for there was some blood on the ground near it. Maru reloaded the alarm and refastened the trip-line, while the trader made his way to the veranda and his cheroots. Maru later repaired to the rafters to keep watch and ward. The fate of the two men now rested on the knees of the gods, and in the balance of luck.

IT TOOK the Little People some fifteen minutes to discover that the white man had left his place of concealment, and in hot rage they crept in single file across the bridge, nearly five hundred of them, to melt like dusky wraiths into the jungle. Scouts went down the pathway first, and low calls gave out the fact that the trail of Maru and the woman had been discovered. At the same time the spot where the trader had lain in the jungle was found, and the trail he made backing on to the path followed.

The little army divided into two bodies to follow out the separate trails, to come together after a minute or two on the tin-tacks so lavishly scattered. There ensued much dancing about, and much quaint swearing of strange little oaths that did not sound well for the hunted. The temper of the Little People was well toward the boiling-point when they finally got clear of the tacks and limped along the trails.

When the party following the broad swathe Maru had left came to the beach they lost the trail completely. Between the palms that fringed the sand, where the Marquesan had stepped, the beach-sand itself lay fairly thick, and the light breeze that drove in from sea had lifted it again and again in tiny spirals, to sift down upon the ground each little while, and so obliterate any faint trail that Maru might have left.

Except for an occasional blurred mark here and there, where a tuft of the coarse grass, or a sheltering palm-trunk had kept off the wind, there was no indication that any one had passed that way. The hunters spread out to search for clear tracks.

It was not long before the man on the end of the line, reaching into the grove, came face to face with one of Karea's prowling scouts. They approached each other from opposite sides of a tall *taro* patch, nearly collided, and fell back with a gasp.

There was a short howl on the part of Karea's man, and a grunt from the little native as he drove home his spear. A dozen men from both sides rushed into the fray, and burning with unquenchable fires, savage from the memory of the tin-tacks, the Little People flung themselves on their age-long foes, forgetting for what they had crossed the ravine.

Thinking the battle had broken, Karea swept down with his whole army, whooping like demons and spurred on by a hundred drums. Instantly Lu flung his array into action, and the rest of the Little People who had been following Maru's trail came in from the beach to aid their comrades. The din was terrific. Karea's men were fighting Lu's and the Little People. Lu's men were fighting Karea's and the Little People.

Only the Little People knew to whom they were opposed. Like little brown demons they slipped in and out of the fray, their poison-spears biting with the quickness of snakes, their powerful stone-slings doing fearful execution. The whole grove was a chaos of scared men and tossing weapons.

But in spite of their fury, numbers were too great for the Little People. Step by step they were forced back, until at last they were almost on the beach. Convinced that the abducting of the woman by the white man had been but a plot to draw them into a trap, they fought with redoubled vigor and for a while held their ground. Then the party who had been following the combined and newer tracks of the trader and Maru, along the beaten pathway, swept on the scene. They took the warring armies in the rear.

The men of Karea and Lu were frightened. They lost all knowledge of whom they were fighting at all. One instant they would be exchanging spear thrusts with a little short demon, and the next they would feel a spear in the side cast by one who looked for all the world like one of their own tribe. It was confusing to say the least.

With startled cries the islanders broke and fled in all directions, casting away their weapons in their haste, and with the Little People yelping on the heels of the general rout.

The trader, listening to the combat from the veranda, smiled to himself as he puffed at his cheroot.

"The war is over. Tomorrow they will be coming to me to doctor their wounds, and to forgive them for their sins."

Maru grinned and bobbed his head from where he sat in the rafters and listened to his master's tranquil voice.

When the noise of the rout had finally died away and the evening shades began to fall through the trees, the trader sent Maru to fetch the native woman from the cave. She was frightened and tongue-tied for a while, and it was only with some difficulty that the trader managed to convince her that she was not destined for the "long pig" ovens.

Then she thought he was going to take her to wife, and another long period of explanation followed. He made her many presents out of the trade-goods and told her of his desire to make peace with her people. She said little, women not being allowed to talk except by permission among the Little People when in the presence of their superiors, but she plainly showed her delight with many uncouth noises as she gazed awestruck at the rich quill-cloth, and at the silver-gilt frame mirror the trader had given her.

Maru watched her the long night through to see that she made no attempt to escape.

With the sun well up the next morning one of the alarm-guns went off. There was a yell and a sound of many feet scampering for cover. The trader, who had been shaving, wiped his face off hastily, and seizing a rifle made for the veranda. Between the palms he could see a host of dark little forms, queer wizened faces peering at him from behind scaly trunks, and strong fingers twitching upon the hafts of throwing-spears.

As the trader had expected, the Little People had returned from the rout of the fleeing island natives and had taken up the trail of Maru again, following it to the cave and then back to the house.

The trader called out the woman he had abducted and urged her to speak to her people. She hung her head and waited for permission, so the trader called for a chief to come forward and listen to the woman. There was a short heated consultation among the palms, and then three men, evidently chiefs, stepped forward and advanced slowly toward the veranda. That they were nervous was apparent, for they cast frequent wild glances around and clutched their spears apprehensively.

The trader halted them with a word when they had approached near enough. He was afraid they would upset another of the trip-lines, and the explosion, he knew, would send every last man back to the jungle, and the present golden opportunity would be lost forever.

The foremost of the three, a somewhat fat, greasy-looking man, spoke sharply to the woman, and she raised her head and answered at length. She displayed the gifts she had been given and pointed repeatedly at the trader as the source of so much wealth.

The trader let his rifle rest against the veranda rail, and stepped away from it as a sign of peace. He had a revolver hidden under his armpit, and Maru had the three chiefs covered from the roof.

After the woman had ceased talking the trader threw a bolt of calico, strings of beads, a few penknives and other articles to the chiefs. They accepted the gifts courteously and with evident delight.

The trader then made a neat speech. He apologized for drawing the Little People into the fight, he apologized for taking the woman. But he was sure the warriors had enjoyed themselves, and he knew that the woman had received no hurt, but rather had obtained a great deal of riches. He explained how both Karea and Lu had threatened him, and that he could not fight a thousand men at once. Wherefore he had had to get assistance, and he had worked out the only plan he knew.

This last caught at the Little People's sense of humor. During the speech the other warriors had come forward from the palms and gathered around their chiefs. As the trader drove home his point of why he had lured them across the ravine they started to chuckle, giggled for a space, and then burst into roars of laughter.

The trader sighed with relief. He knew that he had won now, but for a while he had dreaded whether the Little People would forgive him. If they chose to declare war on him he would have to leave the island, or else they would get him all right. But the sense of humor the warriors possessed saved him. The very grove shook with mirth.

High revel the grove saw that night. The trader distributed gifts with a lavish hand and supplied all sorts of tinned delicacies for the feast. He only put his foot down on the eating of the slain bodies of Karea's and Lu's men, but as there was an immediate outcry he gave way and had the pleasure and the experience of seeing "long pig" served up as it had been in the youth of the world.

After all, it was not his business. Morals and ethics that were good yesterday were changed today. It was all according to how you looked at things.

With the dawn the heavily laden Little People melted into the jungle, loud in their praises of the white man, taking the abducted woman with them. Ever after they were the trader's friends, and many the fine bag of copra he got from them when they passed the way of the house on their hunting-trips.

THREE days later Karea presented himself. The king walked with all humility to the veranda steps and rubbed his nose in the dirt. For nearly fifteen minutes he expressed his sorrow that a party of his hot-headed young men should have attacked his dear friend, the white man. Could he be forgiven? Would he be forgiven? It should never occur again. Lo, he would give the white man four of his prettiest daughters as a guarantee.

The trader kicked the king to his feet, gave him a drink of the forbidden gin, lectured him on the evils of war, and opening a tin of salmon for the royal palate to taste he proceeded to bind up the many spear and shark's-teeth sword-wounds that adorned the king's torso.

Later came Lu with the same story, to get the same treatment, and after him his warriors who were wounded and the warriors of Karea. All was peace and harmony, and the tribes feasted together and got drunk together, and swore everlasting friendship for each other and everlasting enmity toward the Little People.

Lu saw to it that Karea's woman was returned to him with a present of many other women as a sign of good feeling, and Karea responded in kind. Every one agreed that the white man was a god and had used some uncanny methods to save his life and his wealth intact. As for the man who used the ray-tail whip, he was a pig, and the son of a pig, but he was a man to beware of.

One evening, with the recommencement of trade, the trader reckoned up.

"Item: Fourteen bolts of cloth, four of twill, one of velvet. Item: Two cases of mirrors. Item: One case of axes, two of knives, one of "square-face," six of beads, one of brooches, one of musical-boxes. Item: Three cases of foodstuffs. Total: About three hundred dollars, Apia prices. Whew! Result: Peace and happiness for every one concerned. Trade continues strong. Talk about making history. What do you think, Maru? Think we deserve a drink of something special?"

The Marquesan grinned cheerfully and glanced out to sea where a black smudge of smoke lifted and fell on the horizon.

"Drink fine," he murmured.

"Get the brandy, Three Star Martell's," said the trader, lighting another cheroot.

Still grinning the Marquesan disappeared into the house. The low cooing of the red-crested pigeons came from the jungle, and the surf laughed and whispered along the shore.

SHOW 'EM

by Bill Adams

CONFOUND it—one has always got to be going a little better—better—better—a man can't be satisfied, can he? No satisfaction to a *man* as long as he is not going up-hill. It's no end of a hard job to be a man—what with aches and pains and things of one sort and another.

There is this eternal urge—

"You are a man—*show 'em*——"

And yet with all of that there is also the knowledge that no man who imagines himself to be better than the rest of the gang is quite a man.

I detest these stuck-up birds, don't you?

People who say—

"Look here—this is the way to go about it."

I like a guy who will stick his arm through mine and say:

"Bill, you're a darned old fool, but I'm another. Come on—*let's show 'em.*"

I like a lot of things—apple pie, gingerbread, the first flower when Spring runs from the hills and all across the meadows, a pretty girl, ham and eggs, a comfortable chair by a good fire; or a well-cooked gump in the jungles. Any old place where a man can lie down and sleep is the place for me. Ain't that so?

Do you know what a gump is? It is what tramps—who are really the only truly cultured people—call a chicken.

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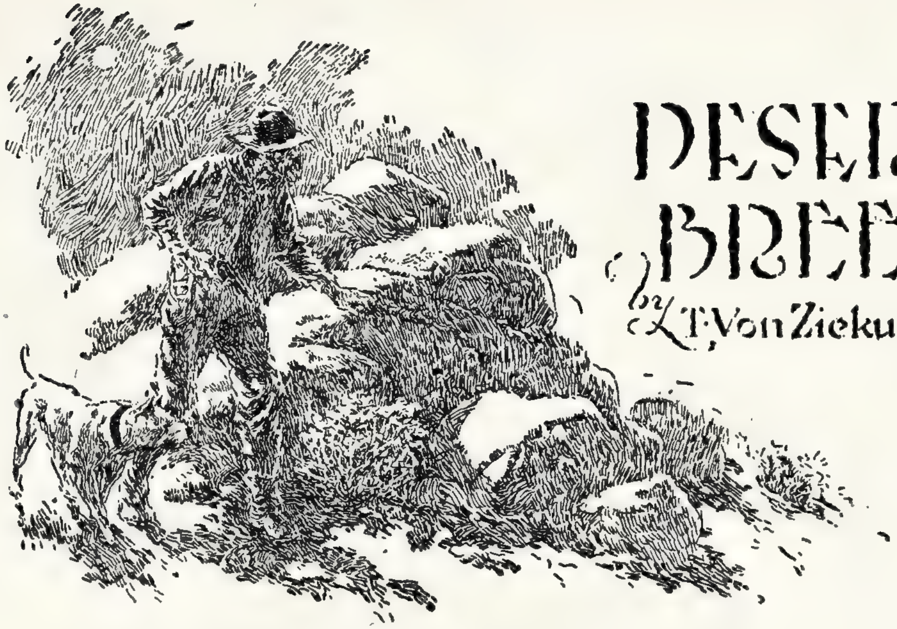


DESERT BREED

by L. T. Von Ziekursch

Author of "John Blanket's Lead Dog."

THE sun beat down like molten liquid on the alkali sand, a throbbing, searing heat that seemed to pulse with the knowledge of a diabolical power over the unresisting silence of the desert. Vague distances were lost in the purplish haze. One lone cactus broke the wastes. Gradually the cruel orb above slid downward into the west to droop behind the low horizon, dim with the heat mists.

Then a sinuous white form appeared in the arroyo, and a pointed head with sharp ears and small eyes set wide in the thick, heavy skull, came to the edge, peering about.

The bull-terrier was ravenously hungry. The blackish water-hole in the arroyo alone had kept him alive. He was eight months old, and all of those eight had been lived here in the desert, two of them alone. So far life had been a harsh thing to him—and in his fierce brain was a deep hatred of man.

His mother had been taken into the desert from the pits of Tiajuana by Joe Silva, gunman, itinerant prospector, gambler and even cattle-rustler on occasion. Mate to one of the mighty fighting dogs of the pits she had brought her progeny into the world here in the arroyo where Silva made his camp while burrowing in vain in the rocky strata that cropped out at the sides. There were signs of the red drift of copper, but Silva, with little love for the genuine toil of the prospector, dug only at intervals.

Three whelps came to the female bull-terrier. Two of them, one a male and the other a female, throve even after the weaning, but the third sickened and became an object for surreptitious kicks and cruelties at Silva's whims when it strayed away from the protection of the mother terrier. It was no good; it probably never would develop the powerful physique that had made its sire a champion of the bloody pits, for its sickness had made it a weakling.

Twice the pup, goaded by Silva's brutalities, turned, silent and murderous, but immature and weak, to be flattened and beaten into submission.

At last April brought its indications of the intense heat in the months to come. Silva worked less in the mornings and lazed about his camp in the afternoons, already beginning his task of training the healthy male pup for its grim profession.

Then he broke camp, packed the outfit and tramped off to the southwest where the brutal miles of alkali sand ultimately ended at the edge of the desert. The mother terrier and two of the whelps, more than half-grown now, went along; but the third, the sickly one, remained, driven back willingly enough to the water-hole, silent, snarling at the man to the last.

Two days and nights the young bull-terrier spent in the confines of the arroyo, quietly lying in the shadows of its sides, only moving as the sun altered the shade. Water and heat, the pure hot winds of the desert and an absence of man's greasy food gradually purged his system of the enervating evil.

Despite the hunger that came the pup felt a new strength. Instead of being weakened by the fast his body began to pulse with a new life, a clean, wholesome thing given by the desert. No more was his system poisoned by the heavy, stale food that Silva threw him grudgingly. He lapped freely of the tepid water that came slowly up through the sands, and longed for food. The third night after Silva departed with the others the bull-terrier pup ranged forth northward mile after mile, until he came to the edge of the prairie dog village.

His hunger was intense. Something moved at the entrance to one of the mounds; he flatterened and waited, with pointed ears back tight against his heavy skull. Then he attacked, swiftly, fairly slavering in his eagerness; but the wily rodent melted into the earth a yard ahead of the eager jaws. Twice more he launched a wild rush at the entrance of other holes, and failed. Then something new met him.

As he crept up toward one of the mounds a peculiar odor, somewhat akin to that which rises from a patch of green cucumbers came to his nostrils; a great, triangular head weaved up several inches and a whirring sound emanated from the hole. The terrier hesitated, and something held him back. The short hair at the base of his neck was erect, but there was that in the slow motion of the great rattler's neck which prevented the dog's assault. Then he arose from his haunches to all fours and trotted off, stiff legged and with many backward glances.

That same odor of the snake came from several other holes, and once he encountered a pair of tiny owls at one of the mounds. Then he saw a prairie dog race across from one series of mounds to another, directly in front. Immediately he settled low and waited, almost entirely hidden by a tiny ridge of broken sand and earth. Another rodent descended one of the little hillocks, hesitated, and scurried a few yards away. A white streak launched forward and the prairie dog squeaked once in dying.

This was food of a different kind. The meal finished, he lifted his pointed muzzle, all bloody, toward the sky and a transition swept over him, a reversion that brought a new feeling of absolute power and independence of man or anything else. He had met nature and conquered. Then and there he became a veritable part of this place of sand and rock, of heat and bitterness, as fierce and hard as the desert itself.

He ranged back to the arroyo and drank deeply at the water hole. Then he slept.

THUS two months passed until now at eight months he had attained almost full stature. The thickness of mature growth was not yet his, but already the hard, muscular outlines of his breed were evident, graceful and lithe withal. About his haunches, shoulders and neck were the finely drawn, graceful contours so eagerly sought by those whose business is the development of the fighting dogs. Every part of his body from the tight, thin-lipped mouth to the dainty ankles and toes, carried its message of swift danger, welded more rapidly in its growth by the ruggedness of the desert than ever could have occured under the guidance of man.

But the prairie dogs at the small village had at last become wary as their ranks were thinned by this new hunter who preyed on them constantly; and now as the terrier emerged from the protection of the arroyo there was a gnawing hunger within him that would not down.

A sound in the distance brought him to a halt, stiff, head thrust forward, pointed ears erect. The hair stirred at the base of his neck as the sound was repeated. It came throbbing and terrible, a cry of death on the desert, deep and uncanny, the awful challenge of the great lobo wolf. Motionless as some exquisite bit of statuary carved from a rock the terrier stood, listening. Silence followed, and his head lowered forward while he tested the air; then he trotted off down the other side of the arroyo in the direction of the sound.

A man, too, heard the howl of the lobo and shuddered involuntarily, while the goose-flesh came up along his back and his spine tingled at the sound. It was near by, coming from a coulée a couple of hundred yards away perhaps. The man led a burro by the halter, but he stopped and loosened the rifle in the holster that hung to the pack on the burro.

Mickey Fortune was searching for water and traveling at night to avoid unnecessary action in the intense heat of the sun. Seventy miles to the northeast he had spent the cooler months, delving into a rocky ledge that stuck forth from the sand; but the signs of copper were false and his season's work had been for nothing. This was the tenth season of failure, and Mickey Fortune could still smile. As the hotter months approached the water-hole near by began to dry out.

Mickey Fortune's face, burned to a ruddy bronze by the sun and hot winds off the sands, broke into a resigned grin at last. He called the burro a few names, sponged out its mouth instead of letting it drink the last of the water, and that night started on the shortest route to the edge of the desert—a hundred miles away to the southwest. Two quarts of water—the final dregs of the hole—were in the bottle. He sponged out the burro's mouth three times each day and took a few sips himself until it gave out on the third day. Then he kept his mouth tightly closed and stopped feeding the burro. This was the fourth night and still another to go.

A smile that was part grimace came over his features as he called the burro some pet epithets and rested his hand gently on its muzzle. They could both stand another thirty or forty hours without water; it was not hot yet, not more than a hundred degrees in the cool of the night. Later on, in July or August, things would have been bad.

As Mickey Fortune halted there the challenge of the great lobo sounded a third time and he took the rifle out of the holster. His eyes had narrowed and he was peering toward the coulée, watching intently for the slinking dark form, when something white streaking into the end of the coulée caught his attention and he wondered at it.

The terrier had been racing toward the coulée when the lobo's third challenging call reached him. His neck arched and he trotted forward with his head high and tail straight out in back. Then he saw the great wolf, twice his own size, and rushed, silent, deadly, with never a growl to warn of the attack.

The first onslaught of those crunching jaws caught the lobo in the shoulder, near the neck. The wolf struggled and tossed wildly, slashing along the dog's back until the hide within range of those mighty fangs was literally in ribbons. But the terrier held grimly, never emitting a sound at the terrible punishment the wolf inflicted, his silence contrasting with the occasional sounds from his adversary. He was lifted and tossed by the wolf's wild thrashings. With the full growth of a few more months he might have matched the strength of this monarch of the desert, but now his immature powers began to ebb.

MICKEY FORTUNE heard the sharp yips of the wolf and reached the side of the coulée with rifle ready. He peered down and saw the dark form and white one whirling and lashing about. The rifle came up, but he hesitated to fire, marveling. Then he leaped down close to the fighters, his eyes wide in surprize as he saw that it was a dog which held the giant lobo with tightly clamped jaws. The whole story of the fight was plain at a glance, even in the dim light from the night sky.

True to the instincts of his breed the dog had sought the throat hold and missed, and suffered terribly thereby. Only an indomitable will had enabled it to hang on under the wolf's murderous counter attack and wild efforts to break away. Where had the dog come from? Mickey Fortune wondered even as he pulled the trigger that sent the heavy .33 bullet through the lobo's spine.

The wolf sank down, writhing, and lay quiet; but the terrier hung on while Mickey Fortune spoke soft words. At last the terrier worried the dead hulk of the lobo feebly, then let go and faced the man, lips wrinkling back tightly. Mickey Fortune bent close, looking at the terrible gashes in the dog's shoulder, admiration mingling with pity in his feelings. Again he spoke softly and attempted to pat the head, but the dog cringed away and bared every fang, too weak now from loss of blood to leap at the man.

Mickey Fortune took a step closer and his hand darted forth suddenly to take a firm hold on the neck. The other hand stroked the powerful haunches while he examined the wounds closely.

Then he straightened, one hand resting

on his belt. He lifted the battered sombrero and shoved it to the back of his head.

"Dog-gone if you ain't a wonder," Mickey Fortune said in a puzzled tone, "but where in the —— did you come from out here? This ain't no place for your kind to be rambling alone. Musta strayed outa some camp."

The dog arose weakly and staggered as it steadied on all fours. Then it turned, stumbling, and headed for the end of the coulée. Mickey Fortune clambered up the side and grasped the halter of the burro, leading it around to where the dog must emerge. But the dog did not come and he looked down. There he saw a white spot in the semidarkness. A few strides and he was at the dog's side where it rested on its haunches, panting, with tongue lolling out.

This time he paid no heed to the dog's silent snarl. He picked it up as gently as possible and scrambled up from the coulée. Then he put the dog down and scratched his own head. What to do with it now—he had no water and his own tongue was swollen for the want of a drink. The terrier panted quietly a moment, then steadied to all fours again and wavered on at a slow walk with the man leading the burro a few yards behind, an eager thought dawning on him.

Frequently the dog halted and sagged to his haunches, with head drooping between his forelegs, and then Mickey Fortune halted also and waited, only to resume when the terrier struggled up and on.

A dark break appeared in front where an arroyo dropped away from the desert flat, and into this the dog stumbled and fell. The burro's ears came up and forward eagerly, and Mickey Fortune knew that a water-hole was hidden there in the arroyo. His swollen tongue came from between parched lips and he dragged the burro in haste down the steep sides of the arroyo. There lay the dog with front feet hanging in the water, lapping it with the slowness of exhaustion. A yard away Mickey Fortune threw himself on the sand and buried his whole face in the water, bathing it while he drank; and almost over him the burro with feet wide apart, stuck its muzzle deep.

Then Mickey Fortune made camp and sat cross-legged at the side of the water-hole in the dim light from the desert sky. Beside him the terrier rested quietly, all his fear forgotten as the man cleansed those awful wounds, purging them with the last drops of whisky in the emergency flask. Near by the burro chewed at a stray tuft of dry desert grass that grew beside the water.

THE flaming disk of morning found Mickey Fortune up and prepared to fill the water-bottles for the start on the last stages of the journey to the edge of the desert as soon as dusk should fall again. But now he halted. Here were the unmistakable indications of an old camp, the tins half buried in the sand, odds and ends thrown carelessly aside by Joe Silva. The other had failed and gone on—Mickey laughed. Ten years of the same thing had taught him to laugh.

He sought the place where Silva had dug, and frowned. The other had been a fool or did not know his game. He had picked the easiest way and dug from the top. Mickey Fortune scraped up some of the particles from the rock-ledge that jutted through the sand at the side of the arroyo and examined them carefully. His jaws tightened, his breath came faster and his eyes widened. Among the bits of rock was the red drift of copper.

He ran back to where the packs from the burro lay near the small tent and grabbed one of the picks, returning to the ledge on the run despite the heat. Steadily he dug at the ledge as the sun rose higher and the perspiration streamed down his body. At last he stopped and gathered the broken rock into a big pile from which he picked numerous bits. He returned to the tent. There lay the terrier, stretched out and panting in the shadow, while the burro drooped in the shade of the arroyo's side.

As Mickey Fortune saw the dog he stopped. Memories of those ten years of futile search, of the incident of the night before when the lobo had died, of the wounded terrier's leading him to the water-hole when his own thirst was almost unbearable, and now of the ledge with its copper vein, chased each other through his thoughts. And in the heart beneath Mickey Fortune's rough exterior a great softness came. The food he prepared for himself he shared with the dog and cleansed the wounds again. There was no indication of resentment, no silent drawing back of lips now. The dog accepted it all stoically.

A week passed, two weeks and Mickey

Fortune's heart sang. He had been fooled often before—but this time each blow of the pick into the rock ledge brought additional proof. He worked steadily, early in the mornings and after the sun had dropped low, resting motionless in the shade of the tent during the intense heat of midday, until, desert-rat that he was, he had to give up. Nothing in human form could withstand those burning blasts that withered and seared from the sky.

A few more days and the last of the water in the hole would be gone. Mickey Fortune filled the bottles and packed the burro after shoveling sand into the gap made by his pick in the ledge. Even a veteran would be fooled into putting it down as an old failure after one look.

He started at night for the town at the edge of the desert, and the great white terrier trotted at his heels beside the burro. In the pack on the burro were some bits of rock that afforded proof of the prized mineral. At the edge of the desert Mickey Fortune turned and looked back. Heat mists arose from the alkali in waves that seemed to leap and arch. Here and there a swirl of burning wind stirred up the dust devils, and far off the horizon was tinged with red and purple haze. Mickey Fortune smiled through cracked lips and grabbed the neck of the terrier with familiar roughness. Then the trio went on toward the town.

TO JOE SILVA, with his new champion of the pits, came stories of a magnificent fighting terrier that had been brought in by a desert-rat, for Mickey Fortune told the tale of the fight with the lobo and of how the terrier had led him to the water-hole to any who would listen, and himself engaged in various battles with those who scoffed. And there were other rumors that reached the ears of Joe Silva, rumors of a copper claim that had been filed with the commissioner.

To Joe Silva it suddenly dawned that the stories all fitted and dove-tailed into a connected narrative; the dog of a fighting breed, born on the desert and left there to die, the water-hole, the ledge of rock with its indications of copper that had failed to materialize under his half-hearted digging.

Joe Silva's hands clenched, his eyes became mere slits above the high cheek bones, and later he came to the town on the edge of the desert from which the stories started. With him was a bull-terrier of finely drawn, graceful lines, with every muscle standing out hard and taut, and wearing a heavy collar studded with brass knobs.

But September was passing and Mickey Fortune was gone, back into the desert, none knew where. With him were the terrier that bore the scar of the lobo's fangs and the aged burro which carried all his earthly goods; for Mickey Fortune belied his name and the stake on which he prospected was a narrow one.

Then Silva, too, went off into the desert with the huge gun swinging at his hip and the fighting dog beside him.

The moon was high in the heavens, dipping toward the west, while the silver dots of myriad stars made the September sky brilliant two nights later when Silva neared the arroyo to which Mickey Fortune laid claim. Silva dropped the halter of his burro, loosened the gun in its holster with the terrier cringing at his heels under his sharp command. He bent low as he entered the arroyo and silently made his way around to the old rock ledge. Then his lips curled back.

There it was—the new pile of rock a few scant yards below where he had dug the season previous before he gave up in disgust. This desert-rat had burrowed deeper, had known his game better perhaps. Mentally, Joe Silva scoffed, and his hand was on the gun-butt. One shot, and Joe Silva could go back to wait a few months, a year or more if need be. Then he could happen to wander into the arroyo and find the skeleton of a man—and file a new claim himself. It had been done before, many times by others.

He picked his way silently along in the shadows, clinging close to the side of the arroyo, the dog in back of him. There was a slight bend, and beyond it the camp of Mickey Fortune.

The gun was in Joe Silva's hand as he peered around the bend. In the moonlight he saw the form of a man stretched on his blankets near the water-hole. A burro stood with head bent toward dry tufts of desert grass. Then there was a rush of something white, a silent rush past the feet of Joe Silva, and fierce mouthings as the two great terriers—blood brothers—met in battle.

Mickey Fortune leaped to his feet, confused, wondering, and a few feet away the gun of Joe Silva pointed at him.

Silva's laugh came, hard and rasping.

"Thought you could get away with it, grabbing the copper I discovered?"

Mickey Fortune did not answer. The dogs writhed and struggled silently, and Silva cast a sidewards glance at their lashing forms, a sense of surprize mounting that his pit champion, his trained fighting dog, had met an adversary that could withstand his terrible attacks for even these few moments. He also wondered at the silence of the other dog; he expected it from his own for the true pit dog is as noiseless in his warring as quiet death.

But Joe Silva's attention was only half given to that frightful struggle going on near his feet; his gun was held high and pointed at Mickey Fortune, the desert-rat whom sheer luck had led to stumble on the thing that he, Joe Silva, should have had and would have now. Only the desert would know.

His hand began to squeeze the gun slowly, the true pull of the gunman that never throws the sights out of perfect, deadly alinement; and Mickey Fortune smiled resignedly as his body tensed.

Silva's features were drawn into a sudden snarling appearance like those of a beast, the mark of the deliberate killer. Then eighty pounds of embattled fury hurled against his legs. The gun flashed its roaring thunder straight up in the night and Joe Silva pitched backward over the fighting brutes.

EVEN as he fell Mickey Fortune was on him, clinching close and seeking to clutch the wrist of the hand that held the gun. They rolled and struggled with the great dogs tugging and tearing over them in a wild mêlée. Something warm dripped down on the cheek of Mickey Fortune while a paw of one of the terriers rested in the face of Silva and the other dog had all four feet planted on Mickey Fortune's body. The top of Mickey Fortune's head jammed up under the jaw of Silva and the latter writhed.

A hot wind played down through the arroyo, and the only sounds that rose were the grunts of the men and labored breathings. Still Mickey Fortune pressed and jolted his head up under the side of Silva's jaw. At last came Silva's chance. He strained away and his teeth fastened in Mickey Fortune's ear.

The desert-rat's hands loosened their powerful body grasp that had held the other's arms tight. His fingers reached up to Silva's nose and eyes, his thumb pressing the nostrils closed while his fingers gouged into the eye sockets; but Silva's teeth only ground tighter and mangled the ear.

The pain to each was intense. Finally Silva's jaws opened and he screamed. His arm wrenched away with a convulsive movement and rose. The gun crashed against Mickey Fortune's head, a terrible blow, but the awful pressure into Silva's eyes was not lessened. The gun came up and battered down again. Now the warm, wet fluid that had dropped from the fighting dogs came from the wound on Mickey Fortune's scalp.

Desperately, Joe Silva crashed the gun again and again, short, powerful blows. Lights flashed before Mickey Fortune's eyes, the blood was streaming freely down over his face, he sought to ward off those blows and Silva squirmed away from the fingers that pressed into his eyes. His fury was terrible and he hesitated with upraised arm, the true instincts of the gunman mounting. His finger was on the trigger, the body muscles of Mickey Fortune were relaxing.

The eyes of the desert-rat began to glaze, his head dropped forward on his adversary's breast, but still he sought to hang close, fighting to the end. Then, vaguely, his glance fell on the dogs. One was limp while the other still tugged fiercely, and a little smile hovered on the lips of Mickey Fortune as he noted that the one that had died wore a brass studded collar.

The lights were dimming, even the forms of the dogs were becoming dull and indistinct. The gun in Silva's hand was poked against his side; the end was at hand. Mickey Fortune closed his eyes, then opened them wide as Silva screamed terribly. Mickey Fortune could feel the shock as the other man's body convulsed. There was a gasp and another scream. Silva's legs lashed about and choking sounds came from him. Horror was in Mickey Fortune's heart as he fought off the black abyss that seemed to drag him down. A bull-terrier, frightful with the bloody streaks from the deep gashes in its shoulders, stood over Silva's chest and its powerful jaws were at the throat, tugging.

A sob came from Mickey Fortune as his arms sagged beneath him; he fought forward a foot, crawling weakly. Another few inches, and one hand wiped the sticky blood from his eyes. Some intense horror, a desperation at the frightful thing, fought with the weakness and the mists. He was at Silva's head and he put out a hand that found the dog's jaws. He forced his fingers between the big fangs and leaned on one elbow to draw his body closer. His shoulder was against the dog's bloody neck and he let all his weight fall forward, pushing.

At last he found voice. It was faint, weak, and seemed strange, but the note of command was in it.

"Go away, you—you devil."

The dog's jaws opened and he drew back. Mickey Fortune's head went forward; the blackness closed in on him and he fell across Silva's neck and shoulders protectingly.

* * *

THE sun was rising out of the orange-tinged haze in the east when Mickey Fortune stirred and rolled over. The blood was dried on his face and throbbing lumps were on his head. His body was weak and his fever-swollen tongue cried out for water.

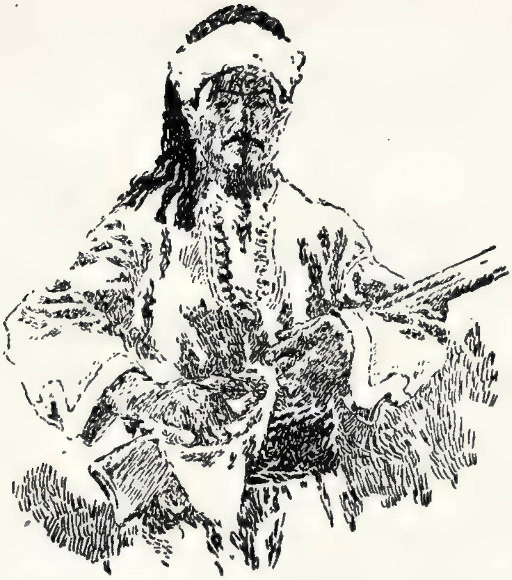
Slowly he turned over from the hard thing on which he rested and his eyes saw it and closed tightly at the ghastly vision. His head averted and he looked toward the water-hole.

At its edge a great bull-terrier, torn terribly, rested, with tongue weakly lapping up the tepid water. A few feet away another dog, exactly similar to the last minute detail of body, stretched stiff in death, the brass studs on the heavy collar tarnished with the dried blood.

Mickey Fortune moved. The dull, beating pains in his head increased. He arose unsteadily, staggering like one not entirely recovered from the effects of some terrible debauch. He wavered and sagged down at the water-hole. Then he, too, drank deeply, and the water brought some measure of relief.

The terrier's tail wagged slightly in a way that denoted uncertainty.

Mickey Fortune's arm reached out and he drew the dog close against his shirt in a violent caress that would have brought yelps of pain from one of a less hardy breed. The terrier's tail wagged with increasing vigor, and together they started back toward the tent where the burro sought the shade already, for the sun's rays were growing hot.



FOR HIS FAMILY HONOR

by George E. Holt

Author of "From the Book of Fate," "Absent Without Leave."

BOBBIE BURTON was new to the country, hence the matter troubled him a very great deal. It interfered with his work, which was not important, and it interfered with his play, which was important. In Morocco it is well to work only when the spirit moves, for then will matters be done properly; but it is well to play whole-heartedly at all times, else the footsteps of one's mind are led into queer places having no merit. Besides which, Bobbie Burton was an artist, and like all artists, although the conception of his work hung heavily and importantly upon his soul, its execution was of much less weight.

Now, to be an artist, even a poor one, which Bobbie was not, requires, I imagine, a sensitiveness to other matters than color and form. Which is an additional reason for friends of an artist to take his work lightly and his play seriously, and when the latter becomes irregular and un-hearted, to seek either for a temperature, a woman or a secret.

Bobbie Burton had no temperature; there was no Christian woman in the whole town of Tetuan where he was painting Moorish mosques and white-robed Mussulmans and shy, gunny-sacked children—and of course the native women were out of the question—and so it was quite evident that it was a secret which bothered him. And as I was the only other American in Tetuan, having been misled there by the false report of extremely large boar in the green plateaus which climb up the mountains south of town, it was perhaps natural that he should unburden himself to me.

"You see," he said—we were letting our horses wander at will over a pretty piece of flat country—"half of the time it doesn't seem possible, and the other half of the time it makes me sick at my stomach. I can't work. I'll tell you about it; maybe that will help.

"When I came here, about three months ago, I engaged a sort of general utility man, named Hadj bel Larbi, to take care of my horse and run errands and so forth. I liked him at once. He was a handsome fellow, middle-aged and a perfect servant—courteous, careful and all that, you know. Would do anything for me cheerfully. Well, after a while he came to me all smiles and said his sister was going to be married, and wanted me to grace the wedding feast.

"I did the proper thing in the matter of a gift, and, when the time came, went to his house and observed things for an hour or two. Queer customs, they have! And queer things to eat. There was one kind of baked meat *I* had never tasted before. They called it—I've forgotten; something like '*rayid.*'"

"Baby monkey," I told him, and he swallowed.

"Well, of course I wasn't supposed to see the bride—but—I saw her."

I expressed surprise. That is *one* thing which is not likely to happen in Morocco.

"It was an accident—and I didn't let on, of course. But I saw her face. Only for a flash. She was rather small for a Moorish girl—and very beautiful. Wonderful eyes—and lips."

"You told no one?" I asked, to make certain. It is not well for a foreigner to have seen a Moorish bride.

"*Of* course not. Well—about a month later *it* happened. Bel Larbi came to me one morning and asked for leave for two days. He wanted, he said, to go and see his sister, who had gone with her husband to his tribe, the Beni M'Sora, up in the mountains. He had arranged for another to take his place while he was away. I told him to go ahead, but not to forget to come back. He hesitated, and then said:

" 'I think, *Sidi*, there is wild pig to be found on the way. If *Sidi* would like a baked pig when I return—if *Sidi* would let me take the little gun which shoots the bullet which grows big—' He meant my 30-30 carbine with the soft-nosed bullets—'I think I can promise him at least one pig. And I shall return on the second day, without fail.'

"So I told him to take the gun and a handful of cartridges, and he rode off with a smile."

Bobbie Burton grew silent for a space. Then:

"What? Oh yes; he came back all right. On the second day, as he had promised. He brought with him a fine fat pig with a hole in its breast you could have stuck your fist through. Those 30-30s are ——.

"*He* pointed out the hole to me. He thanked me for the use of the gun, wiped a speck of dust from it with his *sulham*, and placed it carefully in the rack. Then he took a handful of cartridges from his shakarah, and put *them* back.

" 'Only two I used, *Sidi*,' he said. 'One for the pig, and the other—for another pig. And many thanks, *Sidi*, for your kindness.' "

Again a silence which I forbore to break: I foresaw something of what was to follow, having lived some years in the country. And at last Bobbie took up the tale again, with a queer undertone in his voice.

" 'One for the pig, and the other—for another pig,' " he repeated. "And a hole as big as your fist.

"*I* heard the story a week later, from Richards, the British Consular Agent. He referred to it quite casually—until I asked for details. My man's sister, it seems, had *not* been pleased with the husband chosen for her. He was old—and infected with many things. And there was a youth in the husband's village. And—of course—well, she was indiscreet, and was caught——"

"And," I offered, in the pause, "bel Larbi, her brother, was sent for."

"Bel Larbi, her brother, was sent for. True. It is also true that bel Larbi, her brother, asked leave of me for two days, *and* the loan of the little gun which shoots the dum-dum bullets. And it is still further true, that he used one bullet on a fat pig, and that it tore a hole you could stick your fist through. . . . Richards says that he called her to the door in the sunlight, and shot her through the breast. *And* he wiped the speck of dirt off the gun so carefully, *and* he counted the cartridges, *and*——"

Bobbie was nearing hysteria, so I said:

"But, after all, it *is* the native custom. Your man *had* to do it."

"I suppose so. That's what Richards says too. But—'One was for the pig, and the other——' And she was a beautiful thing——"

"*I* think we had better go back," I said, turning my horse. I raced Bobby Burton to the *fonda* arch. There I left him. There are some things an artist must fight out for himself.

WAR WAMPUM

A FIVE-PART STORY
PART IV

by Hugh Pendexter

Author of "The White Dawn," "Pay Gravel," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

MONTREAL had fallen and the Lilies were vanishing from the strongholds of Canada. Left without the support of their French allies, the Indians banded together to stand against the now dominant English. Pontiac directed the reign of terror and slaughter along the forest paths of the Alleghanies.

From Sandusky two forest-runners, Enoch Meekly and James Ballou, traveled eastward in desperate haste to locate and warn Colonel Bouquet that Presq' Isle, Le Bœuf and Venango had fallen. Night overtook them two miles from Bushy Run, where their friend Steve Marks and his family lived; and, made uneasy by the prevalence of so many savages in the woods, the two runners went on at fresh speed.

They approached the place cautiously and found what they feared—a crowd of Indians besieging the Markses' cabin. They concealed themselves and saw Steve trying to make peace with the red chief, and killed treacherously from behind in consequence.

There were five other white men defending the cabin, and these decided to attempt an escape to the Byerly house a short distance away. Meekly and Ballou managed to join them; and the party, thus strengthened, retreated in the darkness on guard against the pursuing devils. Ballou learned that Marks' daughter, Nell, had been captured.

"Good God!" he babbled.

No one dared think what would happen to her in the hands of the savages.

The little band reached the Byerly place and spent a hideous night beating off the enemy.

Meanwhile one of the white men, Hance Whit, was frantic to begin the rescue of Nell, and, as a serious rival of Ballou, he fell into a hot quarrel which endangered the lives of all of them. The Indians started a fresh attack; but suddenly they scattered. The whites gave a shout of triumph and rushed out to meet Captain Joseph Dingly and a company of rangers who had come to the rescue.

The party now split up, Whit and Enoch going with Dingly and his men in search of the Marks girl, and Ballou with four others pushing on to carry word to Bouquet and to look for Mrs. Byerly—who was reported to have fled with her small children along the Fort Ligonier road but a short while ago. They saw nothing of the mother but had several encounters with the savages, which resulted in the loss of Smiley and Rickards. Ballou and his remaining companions continued on to the fort and arrived unhurt after running the gantlet of another war-party. The Byerlys had got in safely. Ballou told his news to the officer in command and then made ready, after a short rest, to proceed to his next objective—Bedford and Carlisle.

En route he neared the Shawnee Cabins and met an old Indian wearing a fearful medicine-mask. Black Beaver was alone and starving, and when Ballou gave him food he showed that he was likely to prove a valuable friend. He consulted his medicine and said that he would go with the white man. At first Ballou was suspicious.

"Some trick," he muttered, but he consented nevertheless.

They were within a mile of Bedford when they came upon a number of haymakers fighting for their lives against an onslaught of savages. Black Beaver donned his mask, and the attackers fled.

The whites then hurried to collect their dead and set out for the fort. Ballou was well received and reported to Captain Louis Ourry, who had charge of a pitifully small garrison there.

"War Wampum," copyright, 1922, by Hugh Pendexter.

When he and the captain were by themselves Ourry spoke of the desperate situation the place was in.

"Tell Bouquet I'll hold out as long as I live," he said.

THE journey to Carlisle revealed the remarkable tension and panic that the countryside was in. There were exaggerated rumors abroad regarding Indian depredations, and Ballou could do little to quiet the fears of the settlers. Carlisle was in great confusion; and the forest-runner and Black Beaver arrived to find Colonel Bouquet at his wits' end. After giving his report Ballou told the old soldier of Fort Ligonier's plight. The colonel was already aware of this and gave orders to send out a part of his small forces with word that he himself would follow soon.

At this moment they were interrupted by a commotion outside headquarters, and on going to investigate Ballou met a man newly arrived in town.

"I'm Gregory Dunn," the visitor stated.

Ballou couldn't help regarding him with suspicion, for the fellow was wearing among his scalps one that had belonged to an Indian woman and one to a boy. He discussed the red terror with Dunn for some time and finally asked if anything had been seen of the girl, Nell Marks.

"She is at the Great Island village on the west branch of the Susquehanna. I heard the warriors say they were taking her there," the stranger told him.

Ballou returned to Bouquet and related his interview. To his astonishment the colonel became greatly excited.

"Waste no time!" cried Bouquet. "We'll find this fellow and question him."

But when they went to get hold of Dunn the latter had disappeared.

The forest-runner talked with Black Beaver and was startled to hear him vilify the missing man.

"Among the Leni-lenape, his friends, he is called the Trade Knife," the Indian informed him.

Ballou knew then that he had let a notorious renegade escape. He now resolved to make a trip to Great Island in hope of locating Nell Marks. He and the Conestoga were on the point of leaving when they met up again with Hance Whit and Meekly. His old friend was eager to accompany them; but Whit decided to remain behind on account of his arm, which he had lately broken.

The two forest-runners and Black Beaver were soon traveling by canoe down the Susquehanna River. When they had made camp at the end of the day they were terrified by hearing a strange cry ring through the woods. They sat shivering about the fire, and suddenly the horrible scream sounded close by. Looking up, they saw a frightful apparition glaring through the bushes. The next moment it disappeared.

"Gagosa!" cried Black Beaver.

None of them could sleep after that.

They continued their journey on foot, reaching a point opposite Great Island, began to scouts the locality. Ballou swam across the river and captured a sleeping sentinel. The coup was soon discovered by the red men, and the distant bank was lighted up by excited searching-parties. Black Beaver, elated by this success, put on his mask and, diving into the water, went over and caught another of the enemy, who was wading near shore. The Leni-lenape were now throughly frightened, and in the uproar, the three friends discerned the Trade Knife, who evidently held an important position among the savages.

Ballou was growing more uneasy about Nell Marks and determined to do some scouting on his own account. He crossed the river and was making good progress when he fell into a "wampum trap."

The Indians were overjoyed by this catch. They hurried with their prisoner to Chief Tamaque. The whole camp began preparations for torture, and Ballou knew that his only hope for life lay in a precipitate rescue by his friends. The Knife taunted him and stated that the Marks girl had been taken to Pontiac's stronghold. He said also that the two men, recently murdered, had been found and brought back.

The fires were lighted and the skinning-knives sharpened. The white man was bound to a stake and the ceremony began. All at once what seemed to be a ghost appeared at the edge of the torture-place and stood next to the corpses of the Leni-lenape warriors.

The savages were overwhelmed with fear. They fled for their lives when a second ghoul—the one Ballou and his companions had seen before—came shrieking through the woods. Under cover of the confusion Black Beaver crept through the shadows and released his white brother. Quickly making their escape, the two were joined by Meekly, and they all sought refuge in the forest far from the haunts of Tamaque's fiends.

THE two forest-runners and their Indian friend began the journey to Pontiac's stronghold. They ran across the fearful ghost of the previous night, which turned out to be Rickards, half-mad and starving. After helping him as much as possible, they allowed him to accompany them—a decision which later proved of value.

They now headed for Sandusky and, reaching Lake Erie, traveled along a shoreline trail westward. They had proceeded but two or three miles when the crazy Rickards said—

" 'Pears to me some one's comin' behind us."

They prepared an ambush and presently surprized and killed four Leni-lenape who had been trailing them. Journeying on a little farther, they soon learned that Pontiac's camp was near and that they were likely to be caught any time. They stopped, therefore, for a hurried consultation and resolved that if met by any hostile warriors, Ballou was to pose as the Trade Knife with Meekly his prisoner and Black Beaver as guide. They were to be on a mission from Tamaque. Rickards was safe from harm on account of his insanity.

As they had anticipated, they were soon captured and taken at once to Pontiac himself. There followed a long and difficult parley between Ballou and the great chief, during which the white man found out that Nell Marks was probably in camp and certainly destined to be sold to an evil half-breed named the "Rat."

Meanwhile the four murdered Indians had been discovered by the Ottawas and brought in; Tamaque was expected any hour; and the position of the four "guests" was growing more and more precarious. Ballou wondered when the crisis would come and what it would be like when it did.

CHAPTER VIII

DOUBLE TROUBLE

BALLOU was sorely worried as he greeted the new day. A Chippewa brought meat and quickly retreated. Rickards had slept soundly all night but was not entirely recovered from his visit to the death-hut. He fumbled much with his arm. Ballou spoke to him twice before he would go and rob a neighboring fire of much of its reserve fuel. Meekly in vain endeavored to learn what the Conestoga had done with the four scalps. Black Beaver gave him no heed but remained absorbed with the wooden mask, whispering to it and listening to its replies. The morning passed quietly, the Indians keeping at a distance and abstaining from doing or saying anything that would give offense.

When Rickards made short excursions from the fire the warriors drew out of his path and stared in awe. He was both a child of the *manitos* and the proud possessor of Pontiac's wampum. The purple-and-white string was a road-belt and a buckler. Had he carried the great chief's totem mark, that of the Otter, his going and coming could not have been more punctiliously respected.

If he halted by a kettle the warriors about to eat from it hastily withdrew. Did he take fuel from a brave's hands, that man lowered his gaze and slunk back. Even Pontiac himself enjoyed no greater degree of freedom, for there were rules of red etiquette that even the war-chief could not violate. Rickards was a law unto himself and did whatever his whims suggested.

Meekly was fed last, being a prisoner. He asked Ballou—

"What about trying some game to git the gal clear?"

"I shall try one this morning." He found a smooth piece of bark and with the burnt end of a stick scrawled upon it:

> To anny White Woman held Prisoner in the Sandusky camp. Writ Your name on the Back of this. Be ready at Anny minute. Whit hurt his arm & Couldn't come.—B. Known to Indians as Trade Knife.

Sitting down beside Rickards he gave him the piece of bark and said:

"Give that to the white woman. Bring back what she gives you. Don't show it to any one but the white woman and me."

Rickards frowned slightly as he struggled to comprehend; then dropped the bark inside his torn shirt and muttered:

"White woman. White face. Yaller hair."

"She is near here," softly prompted Ballou.

Rickards began fingering the string of Wampum, and for the first time since joining the forest-runners he smiled. He was like a child with a new plaything. He pulled the string forward to its full length so he could admire it more thoroughly. He moved it around his neck and allowed it to ripple through his fingers. He seemed to be unconscious of Ballou's presence, and the distressed lover despaired of his message ever being delivered.

Rickards at last scrambled to his feet and wandered aimlessly through the camp. Had the situation been less tragic in its potentials the white men would have found the behavior of Pontiac's warriors to be very amusing. The grotesque haste of the braves in leaving their fires and boiling kettles whenever Rickards shifted his course spoke eloquently of their superstitious fears. No savage would look on the demented man's face except as he peeped from behind the corner of a blanket.

That Pontiac had been informed of Rickards' eccentric wanderings about the camp was proven by the sudden appearance of criers, who moved rapidly from fire to fire and in different dialects repeated the war-chief's edict. From all quarters of the big camp was shouted the warning:

"Let no man touch the child of the *manitos*. If the child strike and kill, let no man touch him. His path is open where his feet carry him. Pontiac has spoken."

That Pontiac lived up to the letter of this command was soon shown. The criers had barely completed their visits to the different fires when Rickards entered the chief's hut. When he reappeared he had over his arm a blanket marked with the totem of the Otter. A few feet from the doorway he halted and stared stupidly at the blanket and then threw it on the ground, and turned his steps among the huts of the Wyandottes.

Throughout that morning Ballou and the Beaver remained by their fire. Ballou and Meekly discussed from every angle the problem of finding and liberating the girl. The Conestoga gave his attention to the mask, striving to coax some communication from the thick lips. At last Meekly said:

"No use trying to plan when we don't know what's ahead of us! If the gal is here we've got to find out where, and how she is guarded, and do they let her walk round any. One thing's sure: Something's going to happen. When we l'arn just what 'tis then we've got to do some quick thinking. The Injuns are waiting for something to happen. That's what makes 'em so quiet and perlite. Old Pontiac ain't showed his head this morning. Ninivois and Take have twice been to his hut to pow-wow."

"They're all waiting for the scouts to come back. Sleeping Wolf went into the woods before we ate," said Ballou.

"The Wolf comes back alone," softly spoke up the Beaver.

His small eyes glittered as he watched Sleeping Wolf hurrying to the camp. He suddenly relaxed and lost his interest in the man.

The savages barely gave the Wolf a glance as he threaded his way through the different groups and went on to report to Pontiac. And yet there was an air of waiting for something to happen at each fire.

"They're up to something. Some —— trick. Never can tell how an Indian will jump," muttered Ballou.

Suddenly there was a stirring and bustling among the warriors; and Ninivois, chief of the Fox tribe, and Take of the Hurons, stalked to the middle of the camp and spread their robes. They were bedecked with all their finery and were freshly painted. Meekly promptly declared:

"Old Pontiac is going to open a bag of talk. Didn't I say so? There he comes now."

And Pontiac, followed by Sleeping Wolf, who carried a big robe made of wolf-skins and decorated with the sign of the Otter, left his hut and hurried to where the two chiefs were seating themselves. The warriors moved forward and quietly formed a half-circle before him. Sleeping Wolf hastened to the white men and said:

"The Voice of the Three Fires is about to speak. Let the Trade Knife drive his prisoner inside the half-circle. Let the Seneca come with his medicine. Pontiac has spoken."

"The Trade Knife will be glad to hear the wise words of the great chief," answered Ballou in a voice that carried to the ears of the swarthy leader.

He untied the long neck thong from the tree, and with a kick aroused Meekly, and harshly ordered him to march ahead and into the open space in front of Pontiac. Black Beaver picked up his mask and followed. Robes were spread for Ballou and the Conestoga. Meekly sat in front of Ballou. Pontiac stared at the three men absent-mindedly while he waited for a suitable period to elapse. Finally he stood and allowed the blanket to drop around his loins, and his powerful voice began:

"Brothers, the bad flesh still holds on to our land at Detroit and Fort Pitt. The dogs dressed in red must all be killed. The Master of Life has talked to me again in a dream, and if we do as he says there will be no bad flesh west of Montreal and the Mountains after another moon. We came here to meet Tamaque, of the Leni-lenape. We will ask him to go with us and burn Detroit. Then we will go with him and burn Fort Pitt.

"Brothers, we love the French. Our great father across the water has been asleep. Now he is awake. He is sending an army to help us.

"Brothers, we will not wait for that army to come. We will show our good father that we can drive out the bad flesh without any white men to help us. Then he will give us many presents and will say we are great warriors."

He paused and Ballou perceived that the Indians were not enthusiastically impressed by their leader's words. Pontiac was quick to sense a radical difference from the reception of his first harangue at Ecorces in the Spring. The first time he had outlined his campaign plans every ax was waved and every bronzed throat was clamoring for the privilege of picking up the war-belt he then threw down.

That was back in April. The French king even then was sending an army, the allied tribes had been told. In the three months that had passed practically no Frenchmen, except some breeds, had lifted an ax against the English.

Pontiac called on his genius as an orator and in resuming poured forth a torrent of fiery words until the savage audience was unable to resist his eloquence. When he next paused for breath there arose much shouting, and many axes and knives were displayed, and many baleful glances were directed at Meekly, who typed the hated race.

"Brothers," resumed Pontiac, well pleased with the effect of his fiery arraignment, "you are not here to listen to old words. You are here to learn how we can remove the sorrow from the heart of our brother, Tamaque, chief of the Unalachtigo band of the Leni-lenape, when he comes to us and finds four of his young men dead and scalped and their bones not yet covered. We must take the sorrow from Tamaque's heart so he will go with us along the red path. With his warriors we can capture Fort Detroit. But evil birds may whisper to him and tell him to ask us how it was that only Unalachtigo men were killed near the Cuyahoga. That was very bad, the killing of Tamaque's braves. When he comes we must have the truth waiting for his ears. There is a man who, we believe, knows who killed the four men. We want that man to talk so we can tell the truth to Tamaque."

AS PONTIAC ceased speaking he stared at Meekly. There arose a mighty shout of approval. Blankets dropped from shoulders. Hands glided to girdles to fondle haft of knife or handle of ax. Pontiac shifted his gaze to Ballou's strained face and said:

"Brothers, the Trade Knife, the son of Tamaque is here. He has a prisoner—Saganash!" And he fairly spat out the hateful word. "We will ask our brother, the Knife, to make his prisoner tell who killed the four warriors near the river. Let him tell us now when he will warm the white man's feet and make him talk."

He seated himself. Ballou stared stonily at the back of Meekly's head for a minute; then stood and said:

"Warriors of the Three Fires and the other tribes; Pontiac, greatest of war-chiefs and those brave men who help him. The son of Tamaque has a prisoner as the great war-chief has said. The prisoner is English. He may know who killed Tamaque's men. When Tamaque comes we will see. But it is for the Trade Knife to make the prisoner talk. When the white man is warmed at a fire it will not be one lighted by the Three Fires. The son of Tamaque has spoken."

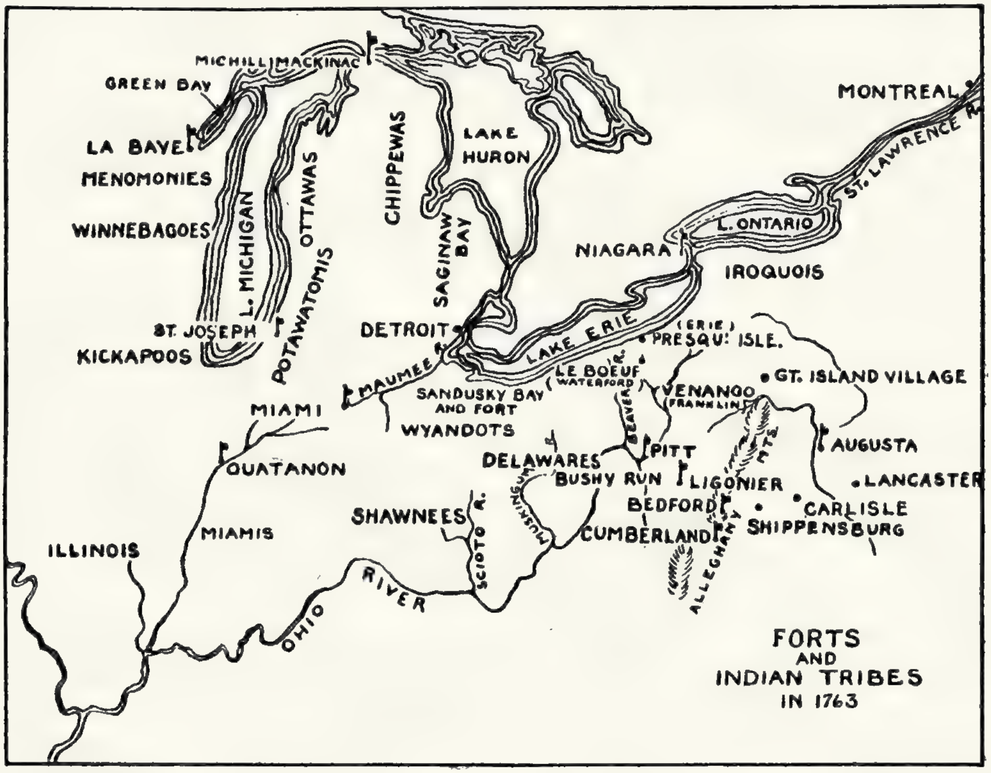
A roar of rage greeted this abrupt and insolent defiance. Ninivois leaned forward and whispered to the imperturbable Pontiac. The war-chief waited for a few moments, then raised his hand for silence. After the clamor had ceased he stood and with great dignity said:

"Brothers; our friend, the Trade Knife, did not understand the Voice. It is true that a warrior's prisoner is his to roast, or take as a son. Pontiac of the Ottawas wants no man's prisoner to burn. We have not asked that the Saganash be put in a big fire. The Three Fires only ask that the Trade Knife make a little fire. Not a fire to send a man among the ghosts. A little fire to make his tongue move and tell us what we should know. The Trade Knife can build that fire and no one else shall touch the white man.

"Brothers, this would be a little thing to talk about if it only meant the burning of a white man. But there is something else to it. And there is something more than to learn the truth to tell Tamaque. If that was all we could wait till Tamaque comes, when he could hear the prisoner talk. But this bad flesh, this white man with the cord around his neck, was one of many white men, we believe, who took the Leni-lenape warriors by surprize and killed them. While we wait for Tamaque to come this prisoner's friends will have time to run back to the settlements. We want to know the truth before those men can run and hide. We want to catch them and use their scalps in covering the bones of the dead. Then when Tamaque comes the sorrow will be lifted from his heart. Then the prisoner can tell again about the fight near the river. Pontiac does not believe the Knife will keep his prisoner from a little fire and let more bad flesh run away."

Ballou waited a decent interval and then rose to reply. Every warrior listened eagerly, expecting Pontiac's request would be granted.

"O great Pontiac, Voice of the Three Fires," began Ballou. "Let the Master of Life read your heart and see why you should think the Trade Knife is without a tongue, or, having a tongue, why he should be unable to tell the truth to Tamaque. If a man's prisoner is not his prisoner, then why fight to drive out the English, or any other bad flesh? We fight the English so we may be free. But how are we free if we bring in a prisoner and a man says, 'This is my prisoner for a while'? Or, 'I will burn that man's prisoner a little'? The Knife's prisoner is his own. If Pontiac wishes to know about the men who killed Tamaque's warriors, then let his Ottawas go hunt for them. If my prisoner helped to kill the four men of my tribe even then he can not tell why the Ottawas were not in the fight. Tamaque, my father, may want to know about that. Let Pontiac ask his braves what they were doing while my father's warriors were being hit in the head. Let Pontiac question his own men before lighting a fire, or asking the Knife to light a fire, under a white man the Trade Knife caught."


MICHILLIMACKINAC
GREEN BAY
LA BAYE
MENOMONIES
WINNEBAGOES
L. MICHIGAN
OTTAWAS
POTAWATOMIS
CHIPPEWAS
LAKE HURON
SAGINAW BAY
MONTREAL
ST. LAWRENCE R.
L. ONTARIO
NIAGARA
IROQUOIS
ST. JOSEPH
KICKAPOOS
DETROIT
LAKE ERIE
(ERIE)
PRESQU' ISLE.
MAUMEE
LE BOEUF
(WATERFORD)
R.
SANDUSKY BAY AND FORT
WYANDOTS
MIAMI
VENANGO
(FRANKLIN)
GT. ISLAND VILLAGE
BEAVER
PITT
AUGUSTA
OUATANON
DELAWARES
BUSHY RUN
LIGONIER
LANCASTER
MTS.
BEDFORD
CARLISLE
SHIPPENSBURG
SHAWNEES
R.
MUSKINGUM
CUMBERLAND
MIAMIS
ILLINOIS
SCIOTO
RIVER
OHIO
ALLEGHANY
FORTS AND INDIAN TRIBES IN 1763

This time the grim-faced audience made no outcry. So audacious and insolent was the second defiance that even the Ottawas were compelled to admire the speaker. Pontiac lowered malevolently on the young man and took his time to ponder his reply. He knew the temper of his followers. He knew they needed a prisoner to torment to stimulate their depressed spirits. It would be poor policy to override the will of the Knife. But it would be a catastrophe to incur the suspicions of Tamaque. Could the white prisoner be compelled to speak before Tamaque arrived, and could some of his associates be caught and presented to the Unalachtigo chief, then the bones of the dead men would be covered, and Tamaque probably would be induced to join forces with Pontiac for one grand assault on Fort Detroit.

Take of the Hurons leaned forward and fiercely whispered:

"When the Trade Knife is away from his prisoner have the Master of Life tell Pontiac to burn the truth out of the man. Surely the Master of Life can do as he will with any prisoner."

Ninivois, by no means given to gentleness, more cautiously advised:

"Let this talk sleep. By another sun the Knife may not talk so big."

Pontiac decided to accept certain portions of both bits of advice. Already a scheme was forming in his shrewd mind which hugely appealed to his fancy. Rising and motioning for Sleeping Wolf to gather up the big robe he said:

"The Trade Knife is a brave man. Pontiac is glad to call him friend. We will sleep and find wisdom in our dreams. Let no man hurt the prisoner. Pontiac has spoken."

As he was finishing and before he could turn to go there came a swirl of commotion on his left, and glancing in that direction he beheld dignified warriors hastily crawling out of the way of Rickards, who was walking with head thrown back and apparently not seeing those who were seated in his path. All eyes followed him as he approached and stood behind Pontiac and between Ninivois and Take. The two chiefs drew their blankets across their faces and turned away.

Rickards moved around in front of Pontiac. The war-chief's gaze did not waver as Rickards peered steadily at him. Slowly Rickards advanced a hand to Pontiac's girdle and drew forth the chief's knife. Without moving a muscle Pontiac watched him raise the knife and examine the edge and then thrust it into his own belt. But Rickards was not done yet.

Some sense of fairness, the instinct of the trader, next prompted him to produce his own knife and clumsily place it in the chief's girdle. Pontiac's deep chest thrilled with joy, and he swept his proud gaze over the staring spectators and silently invited them to bear witness that the child of the *manitos* had not come to disarm him, but to cement the pact of brotherhood by exchanging knives. Nor would any fail to read in the demented man's action a symbolic meaning: Some of the *manitos'* medicine must accompany the knife, and a new strength was added to the Three Fires. As Rickards spied his three friends and moved to join them Pontiac threw high both hands and loudly cried out:

"It is good. He gives a medicine knife to the Three Fires."

With that he flung his blanket over his shoulders and hurried away.

Ballou yanked on the cord and Meekly got on his feet. The Beaver led the way back to the fire. Rickards brought up the rear. As Ballou fastened the long cord to the tree Meekly lamented:

"What made the fool do that? Pontiac now feels all puffed up with importance."

Before Ballou could express himself Rickards was treading on his heels and babbling:

"White face. Yaller half."

"Rickards, did you give the piece of bark to the white woman?" fiercely asked Ballou.

Rickards drew the Indian knife from his belt and examined it with childish interest. Ballou repeated his question and Rickards drew the piece of bark from his shirt and dropped it on the ground and resumed his examination of the knife. Ballou dropped to the ground and stared down on his own message. He slowly turned the bark over and could scarcely restrain himself from shouting as he read:

> Help. I am grievously Afraid. I am in a Cabbin with Many guns. A White man comes in. He Seems sore Afflicted. The Indians do not Bother him. Get me out of here. I am Afraid, Nell Marks.

"What is it?" whispered Meekly as he noted his friend's strong emotion.

"Nell Marks. She's a prisoner in the Wyandotte village. In a cabin 'with many guns.'"

She's cooped up with the new muskets that go to Tamaque when the Rat gets her!" hissed Meekly. "Tell the Conestaga to follow Rickards and see what cabin he goes into."

Ballou explained the girl's message and requested him to locate the cabin. The Beaver picked up his wooden mask and whispered to it.

"The False-face tells me I shall find the cabin before the sun goes to sleep. The False-face says my white brother should paint himself again."

He handed over his paint-bag and a small trade-mirror.

Ballou hung the mirror on a stake and proceeded to paint his face and renew the knife on his chest. The hours passed slowly. None of the warriors intruded on the little group, but there was a certain something in the air that kept Ballou and Meekly strung up to a high pitch.

"Something's going to burst loose," warned Meekly. "Know it just as well as I know it's going to rain when my rheumatiz begins to kick up in my left leg. Ninivois and Take are with Pontiac now. Something is going to crack, and the Injuns know what it is and are waiting."

Ballou gave most of his attention to the forest line. It was from the forest that danger might come at any minute, he told himself, when the scouts returned and exultingly proclaimed the trail they had picked up led to the spot where the white men and the Beaver first met Sleeping Wolf and his braves. There was ever the dread of Tamaque's coming, but the Unalachtigo chief would come by water and could not burst upon them of a sudden. Tamaque and the Trade Knife formed a sinister background for all of Ballou's fears. The report of the scouts would be like a shot from a bush.

THE sun crossed the zenith and nothing happened. The warriors maintained their attitude of waiting and even the hunters seemed loath to leave the camp. In the middle of the afternoon Sleeping Wolf came to Ballou and courteously announced—

"The great Pontiac asks the Trade Knife to come to his cabin for a talk."

"It's going to happen," mumbled Meekly. "Better take a knife."

But Ballou did not believe he stood in any personal danger so long as neither the scouts, nor Tamaque, appeared to denounce him. Unarmed he left the fire and followed the Wolf to the hut. He did not relish the scrupulous care of the savages in turning their heads away as he passed. Heretofore he had received venomous scowls, and, because of his defiance of Pontiac he had expected the malignant glances to be doubled. This general avoidance of his gaze impressed him as having been planned.

Being convinced the red men had arranged a definite program and were keeping him in ignorance of its details was equivalent to believing his luck was deserting him. There remained, however, the thin hope that Pontiac was about to inform him of all that was about to happen. He entered the cabin, and after blinking the sun-glare from his eyes turned on his conductor and suspiciously demanded:

"What does this mean? Your chief is not here."

Sleeping Wolf readily explained:

"He was here when he told the Wolf to go to you. He has stepped out. Perhaps he has gone to look on the four dead men. Perhaps he will lay the knife of the *manitos'* child on the dead men's heads and listen for ghost voices to tell him who killed them. Or perhaps he has walked through the Wyandotte village with Ninivois and Take, so they may talk alone. He will be back soon. Let the Trade Knife smoke his pipe and wait. The Wolf will go and look for him."

"He knew I was coming. He is not here," complained Ballou.

Sleeping Wolf's small eyes dilated, and in savage irony he demanded:

"Has our brother lived so long with the Leni-lenape that he has not heard of Pontiac? Does he believe that the mighty Pontiac runs to a man when he would talk with him? Has he not heard that men come to Pontiac and wait in silence until spoken to?"

"The Trade Knife has lived long with the 'real men' whom the Three Fires call Grandfather. Chiefs of that people are ready to talk when they send for a warrior to come and sit on a mat."

With that he dropped on a robe and ignored the scowling visage of the Wolf. The Wolf was in a mind to make harsh reply to the young man's bold speech, but thought better of it and left the hut. Ballou was greatly disturbed by Pontiac's absence. Only a madman would refuse to heed Pontiac's summons, but red etiquette moved in a deep groove. When a man was sent for, let him be but a novice on the war-path, and he would find his chief waiting to receive him.

The unwritten laws were more closely observed by the Indian than were the written laws by the white man. Pontiac had not forgotten he had sent for the Knife. No alarm had called him from his hut. Therefore, his absence was based on a very definite cause and doubtless was timed so to avoid a meeting with the man he had summoned. Ballou arose and examined the cabin in lack of anything better to occupy his mind.

He decided that while Pontiac was the greatest of war-chiefs he was exceedingly indifferent to his surroundings. Bones and rubbish littered one end of the hut, a condition that no self-respecting Wyandotte or Delaware would endure. As the minutes passed and the chief did not put in an appearance Ballou stepped to the door. He was surprized to behold the camp empty of savages. He assumed they had gone to the forest in answer to a smoke, signaling the return of the scouts.

"But it's mighty queer there wasn't any yowling," he muttered. "Not even a single yell, let alone any gun-firing. They couldn't be more quiet if they was creeping out to make a surprize attack."

Then he grew intensely angry at Pontiac's protracted absence. But first in his realization was the fact that the adopted son of Tamaque was being scurvily treated. He returned to his robe and filled his pipe and fidgeted and fretted and swore he would wait ten minutes and then return to his fire. He had waited five minutes and was aroused from his ireful meditations by the sound of swift flying feet approaching the hut. He sprang to the door and was much agitated to behold the Conestoga. As Black Beaver came to a halt, his eyes glittering with excitement, he cried:

"The Ottawas drag our white brother out on the marsh. They plan to burn him. They lifted their clubs over the Beaver's head and told him it was not his prisoner."

"Tricked, by ——!" yelled Ballou. "And Pontiac? Is he with them?"

"He is not with them."

"Tricked into leaving him so the scum could get him!" he fumed as he ran his swiftest toward his fire. "Pontiac goes into hiding and will claim his warriors acted without authority."

He paused at the fire only long enough to snatch up his rifle and belt-weapons. As he ran out on the marsh he left Rickards busily collecting fuel from the various fires. Ballou was soon in sight of the warriors, and his pulse quickened and his hot rage blinded him to all consequences as the savages began dancing in a wide circle. But what was most significant was the entire absence of singing and whooping. He would not have believed the red men could dance in silence around a prisoner being put to the torture. They were suppressing their natural instinct so that he might not know what was going on.

As he raced up to the circle the savages on the opposite side grunted out warnings. He heard Meekly groan:

"Old friend! Where are you? They will roast me!"

Ballou struck the circle at full speed and tumbled three warriors to the ground. He did not halt until beside his friend. Meekly was stripped to the waist and was pegged out in spread-eagle fashion. As Ballou finished his charge a warrior was in the act of kneeling to empty a bark-scoop of live coals on the bare chest. With a mighty kick Ballou sent the coals into the tormentor's face; then with two slashes of his knife he severed the wrist cords and dropped the weapon for Meekly to snatch up and free his ankles. Resting on one knee and raising his long rifle he hoarsely defied:

"What Ottawa dog will be the first to go among the ghosts?"

The rifle swung from right to left and back, covering half of the circle. At his back the Beaver cried out—

"Black Beaver's rifle shoots very straight."

Ballou knew he would not be taken by surprize from the rear. The savage who had received the coals in his face was groveling on the ground and groaning loudly. For a fraction of a minute the dancers glared in silence at the two kneeling figures.

"—— you!" yelled Ballou in French. "Are you all cowards? Do you only attack helpless prisoners? Come on and die with me!"

Yells and screams of demoniac hate burst explosively from the circle, and the warriors started to close in, but the two rifles, swinging back and forth, sapped their courage. With the exception of knives and axes the men were unarmed. Two would surely die if they rushed toward the prisoner and his defenders. Several ran back to the camp and soon returned with bows and arrows and some muskets. Ballou feared the bows more than he did the guns. With loud yells the warriors separated.

"Fire when the first arrow comes!" cried Ballou over his shoulder to the crouching Conestoga.

"'I see thee! I see thee. Thou shalt die!'" screamed the Beaver, repeating the hunting-call of the False-faces when about to devour a man.

Another voice was added to the mad medley of hate. It struck through the general clamor and pierced the ears. Rickards came loping on to the scene with a four-foot section of a sapling in each hand. Again he cried out, but it was not the weird ghost-howl he had raised in the forest when living on wild cherries; but rather the voice of one who lusts for battle. With a swing of each powerful club he mowed down the first group of savages and passed on to the next. The insane fury of his gaze, and the purple-and-white wampum of Pontiac around his neck, checked any show of retaliation. Snarling in futile rage the warriors rapidly gave ground and nimbly scurried out of reach of the long clubs.

Ballou called him by name and at last secured his attention and told him to desist. Then yanking Meekly to his feet he refastened the neck cord and started to drive him back to the camp. The Conestoga picked up the hunting-shirt they had torn from the veteran, and, with his rifle across his arm, brought up the rear. This move reanimated the savages, and while refraining from offering Rickards any hurt they renewed their skirmishing and worked in closer.

Rickards suddenly seemed to lose all interest in the situation and dropped his clubs to play with the string of wampum.

"We've lost the girl!" groaned Ballou, as he became convinced the best he and his friends could do was to go down fighting. And the realization that he had failed to succor the maid was a foretaste of the deepest hell. She would never know why he did not follow up his message with an attempt at rescue.

"God help her!" he groaned as he prepared to open the actual fighting by sending a bullet through the most daring of the savages.

And never sounded more heaven-blest speech than the stentorian voice of Pontiac shouting:

"Stop! stop! Men of the Three Fires, stop!"

And in the next moment the over-chief and Ninivois and Take were running along the diameter of the circle to group themselves about the three threatened men. Bows were slowly lowered. Muskets were dropped to the ground. With his blanket hanging from his hips the heart and brain of the great uprising elevated both hands and passionately rebuked:

"What would my children do? Kill the son of Tamaque and send Tamaque back to the Ohio, or perhaps into the arms of the Saganash? Has an evil spirit touched your heads that you act like this? Have you gone mad like a wolf and only think to run and bite? Back to your kettles before Pontiac forgets you are his children. Your leaders will look after the Trade Knife and his prisoner. And have you dared to offer death to the brave Seneca? The Seneca who has brought you the powerful medicine of the False-faces? Back to your kettles!"

THE reaction left Ballou feeling as limp as a wet rag and sweating from every pore. He marveled at the consummate dissimulation of the man. He now fully understood Pontiac's scheme. The chief had planned to have Meekly surreptitiously tortured and compelled to speak. If the Trade Knife complained to Tamaque that his rights had been violated then the war-chief of the Ottawas would disclaim any discourtesy and place the blame on some of his incorrigible young braves. Now that his game was interrupted he was as an avenging spirit, and his indignation was boundless. And so great was his influence over the savages that none thought to stand forth and in self-defense betray the chief's participation in the plot.

"He's a funny cuss!" faintly remarked Meekly.

"Great is Pontiac!" shouted Ballou.

This tribute touched the vanity of the war-chief. Whirling about he folded his arms and with rare histrionic ability, half-deceiving himself, he proudly declared:

"A fire may start in the dry grass of any camp or village. A little fire started here today, but the Voice of the Three Fires has killed it out. Look, Trade Knife, son of Tamaque, chief of the Unalachtigo. The children of the Ottawa are sorry. They have been bad children. Now they are sorry and go back to their kettles. They have heard their father's voice. Take your prisoner where you will. Take him from fire to fire. You will not find a warrior who will lift his eyes, let alone his knife or ax. For Pontiac has spoken."

"Great is Pontiac. Loud is the Voice of the Three Fires!" shouted Ballou.

He was so overwhelmed by this sudden whim of Fate that he could almost look upon the great chief as being kin to the gods, surely the equal of any of the red gods.

This enthusiastic tribute was of sweet savor to Pontiac, although he was already regretting the upset of his little plan. Yet, at that moment, he was pleased with himself and lenient in his thoughts toward Ballou. He drew his blanket over his shoulders and gravely reminded—

"The Trade Knife did not wait in the hut to hear Pontiac's talk."

"He waited until he heard his prisoner crying for help; the prisoner being tortured by those who had not helped to catch him," responded Ballou, his usual caution beginning to reassert itself. "He went to listen to Pontiac and found an empty hut. Yet he waited till his medicine told him the white man was stolen by the Ottawas."

"There were dead men waiting to have their bones covered. The Trade Knife came ahead of time. Sleeping Wolf forgot his talk and did not give it right. My

Ottawas are like children. They fear Tamaque will blame them for the dead men. They wanted to know the truth so they could tell him when he comes. Tomorrow they will be very sad to think they offered harm to another man's prisoner. It was Pontiac's wish to roast one side of the man until he told about the fight near the river. But the man is the Knife's prisoner and Pontiac will not touch him. Evil birds whispered to the Ottawas, the Chippewas, and the Potawatomi. Now their ears have heard the truth and they will be ashamed. Did the white man talk while the fire was being made ready?"

"Only to call the Ottawas 'dogs,' and to say his heart was heavy with shame that children should put him, a great warrior, to the torture," replied Ballou.

Pontiac scowled and then glanced askance at Meekly's bald head—

"Is the white man medicine?" he uneasily asked.

"The top of his head was scalped. He lives and no scars show where the knife ripped off the flesh. But after the Trade Knife has finished with him there will be scars his medicine can not hide," boasted Ballou.

By the time they reached the fire Rickards and the Beaver had disappeared. After Meekly had been tied to the tree Pontiac bent over him and examined the bald head. There was not a sign of a hair, nor the suggestion of a scar. With more respect than Meekly ever before had received from any red man Pontiac backed away, and muttered:

"He has a medicine. I do not know what it is, but the Master of Life knows and will some time tell me in a dream. The child of the *manitos* has gone again?"

"He goes and comes like a water-bird. The medicine of the Seneca is following him."

Pontiac rearranged his blanket and, haughty of mien, stalked away to be joined by Ninivois and Take. The fires sprang up as new fuel was added, and soon the camp was a scene of activity as several hunters returned with three deer and much small game. The kettles were filled and set to boiling. Sleeping Wolf suddenly emerged from the forest and made the camp forget its hunger by lifting his voice in an ululating cry. Every Indian sprang erect.

"Scouts are coming back! —— to pay!" grunted Meekly.

Ballou bent over him and loosened his bonds and kicked his rifle within reach. Rickards and the Beaver came through the excited mob of savages attracting scarcely any attention; for all eyes were fixed on the figure of the Wolf.

Rickards dropped to the ground and idly stared at the fire. The Beaver reported:

"In a cabin on the north of the Wyandotte village, guarded by two warriors, is a white woman. I saw the white man push by the guards and go inside and come out again."

"White face. Yaller hair," muttered Rickards.

Sleeping Wolf howled again, to make sure the stage would be set for a dramatic entrance, and came forward on the run. Behind him streamed a dozen scouts, and the leader of these held something above his head and yelled most mournfully.

"What the —— is up now?" gasped Meekly.

"The medicine of the Ga-go-sa is very strong," proudly informed the Beaver. "They can not say we were among those who killed the Leni-lenape. They have found the scalps I placed in the trail after they traveled east. They found them when they came back. The Beaver swam with the scalps held above the water until he reached the lake. Then he found a canoe and paddled along the shore and landed and found the Cuyahoga trail. So much did Ga-go-sa tell him to do."

Even Pontiac could not resist the drive of curiosity, and now he came from his hut and hastened to meet the scouts. With a word for the Beaver to stay by the fire Ballou hurried to learn what acutally had happened. His course cut that of Pontiac, and they went on together. They soon met the leader of the scouts. He held up the four scalps, painted red on the inside and mounted on red hoops. Sleeping Wolf loudly announced:

"My scouts have found the scalps of the dead men. The scalps were in the trail that follows the shore of the lake. They were not there when the scouts went to the east. They were there when the scouts came back. The men who killed the Leni-lenape took time to dry and mount and paint the scalps. While the scouts were following the Cuyahoga trail a long way the killers came within two arrow-shots of Sandusky, and one of them lost these scalps."

"Is the trail of those men being followed?" harshly demanded Pontiac.

"Four of my best scouts are trying to find the signs. The signs are few and faint and look to be old. Yet the scalps were not there when the men went toward the Cuyahoga. Very soon it will be too dark in the woods to look for signs. My men will sleep in the woods and look with sharp eyes when the sun comes back," replied the Wolf.

Pontiac took the scalps and examined them closely. Sleeping Wolf had reasoned well. Some one had dropped them very recently. The chief and the Wolf exchanged glances. Each was thinking the same thought, and each knew it was better to leave it unsaid: The scalps had been mounted by a red man. Some white men on the border affected the Indian mode of dress and some adopted the red men's cruel ways of making war. But neither Pontiac nor the Wolf believed that any white man, while in proximity to a large camp of warriors, would take the time to dress and paint and mount the trophies. The chief swept his gaze over the silent assemblage and wondered if any of his young men in the Cuyahoga party had given way to a terrible blood lust and had killed Tamaque's men.

It was very possible that the killings were so many cold-blooded murders. If any of the Ottawas were guilty then one of them was among the scouts sent out by the Wolf, and either had lost the scalps on returning from the scout, or had become frightened and had thrown them away.

"A red man dressed those scalps," spoke up Ballou.

"White men stretch scalps and paint them," said Pontiac.

"They have been in the smoke," said Ballou.

"White men make smokes," retorted Pontiac.

"How many of the scouts were among the warriors going with the four Leni-lenape to meet Tamaque?" persisted Ballou.

This was the question Pontiac had intended to put to the Wolf when they were alone.

"None of the scouts were among the Cuyahoga warriors," replied the chief.

"Tamaque will look at the scalps very close," said Ballou. "He will want to know what Indians killed his warriors."

Inwardly the chief raged. He was being placed in a humiliating position. He was answering questions instead of putting them. The insolence of the Knife was intolerable. Yet his face remained impassive until he had bowed his head over the scalps for a moment, when his eyes flashed, and shaking the four hoops he announced:

"These scalps were not taken from the Leni-lenape. They are too old. They have been in the smoke a long time. They were taken and smoked and painted before Pontiac brought his warriors to Sandusky."

He gave a hoop to Sleeping Wolf, one to Ninivois, and another to Take, and waited for their opinion. Each man studied a scalp slowly and carefully. Then, commencing with Ninivois, each gave the same response: The scalps were cured before Pontiac's camp was pitched at the bay. Ballou smiled grimly at this subterfuge, yet did not object to it. Fearing Tamaque's displeasure Pontiac was seeking to establish an alibi for his followers.

After the hoops had been handed back Pontiac gave them to Sleeping Wolf and said:

"That hair never grew on the heads of Tamaque's men. Let them be fed to the big fire."

As the crowd slowly moved to the central fire Take of the Hurons spoke up and said—

"The white prisoner can tell us the truth."

"The white man belongs to the Trade Knife. It is for him to make the man talk if he would open Tamaque's eyes," haughtily retorted Pontiac.

Then in a lower tone and with his gaze directed toward Rickards he added, "But there is another man, one who talks with the *manitos*. Some time he will tell."

Halting before the fire, and waiting until closely hemmed in by the Wyandotte and the northern Indians, Pontiac loudly announced:

"We burn this hair because it is old hair. So long as we thought it might come from the heads of the four dead men we planned to keep it to show to Tamaque. But now we know it was smoked and painted before the Leni-lenape men, killed near Cuyahoga, left Sandusky with my children to look for Tamaque at Presqu' Isle. Tamaque will not care to look at this hair, but he will ask for the men who killed his men. Let many scouts take to the woods after the next sleep and look for signs of white men."

One by one Black Beaver's trophies were tossed into the flames under the big kettle.

PONTIAC, followed by his lieutenants, departed and the warriors scattered to their kettles and the Wyandottes retired to their huts. Ballou rejoined his friends and related all that had taken place. After finishing his recital of facts he surmised:

"Pontiac is very cunning. He half-suspects some of his own men killed the Delawares. He dodges responsibility by claiming the scalps were taken before he came down the lake. Unwilling for Tamaque to examine the hair he destroys it."

"He's a —— fox," agreed Meekly. "But he can't dodge the fact that some one has been near his camp and dropped the hoops while his scouts were working to the eastward. I 'low there's several things that's worrying him just now."

Black Beaver sat in stony silence, his wooden mask clasped to his breast. To him Meekly said—

"All your good work has been burned up, my red brother."

"The next time it will be Ottawa hair," hissed the Beaver. "That is too poor to put on hoops. Pontiac shall have some of that to burn very soon."

The Beaver was now concerned with but one desire—to wipe out the insult Pontiac unwittingly had thrown upon him. The scalp-locks of brave men were not to be burned on a camp-fire. To lay a careless hand on the scalp-lock of a living man was to give great offense. Taken in warfare the lock was proof not only of the slayer's courage and skill, but also the evidence that some *manito* had decided the victim's allotted span had been finished.

The burning of the scalps was an insult to the Beaver and to the dead men. The Beaver had great respect for the four dead men. They had fought very bravely. Animated by a desire to show the Ottawas lounging by the Cuyahoga how to fight they had pressed on to their death. The Beaver had intended only great honor to the dead in preserving the trophies. Ultimately he would have offered them to the sun, or the water, or the earth, and the ghosts of the slain would have approved.

"If the Beaver had been here alone," he said, as if speaking to himself, "he would have taken the scalps and told the Ottawa dogs they belonged to brave men. "

"And Pontiac would have burned you along with the scalps," snorted Meekly.

"What is a little fire? All men must die. But ghosts do not die. The Beaver will ask the False-faces to tell the Leni-lenape ghosts that he did not burn their hair."

"The ghosts can not blame my red brother for what Pontiac has done," soothed Ballou.

But the Beaver was not so sure of this. Even *manitos* were whimsical in granting and withholding favors. Ghosts might be even more erratic. The Beaver turned to the wooden mask for comfort, but, although he listened long, the swollen lips and protruding tongue had nothing to tell him. He withdrew to one side and threw his blanket over his head.

"The derned fool is gitting skeered of losing his medicine," grunted Meekly. "If he takes the notion his medicine is gitting weak along of them burnt scalps he'll face Pontiac and tell everything. What with him all upset, and with Rickards stumbling 'round and blurting out whatever comes into his crazy head, Enoch Meekly is guessing it's high time we was leaving Sandusky. Git your head to working. We must grab the gal and run for it."

"We must make a plan at once," agreed Ballou. "The big job will be to get her away from the cabin unseen. If we can get her into the woods with a fair kind of a start we'll stand a chance."

"Better she's killed trying to git away than to fall into the hands of the Rat," sighed Meekly.

Only Rickards slept soundly that night, his vacant mind nursing no fears. Black Beaver remained seated under his blanket and had no speech for his friends. Medicine is a state of mind. He believed his medicine had been grossly insulted by the destruction of the scalps. It did not impress him as being illogical to believe a medicine which could protect him in battle and at other times of great dangers was helpless before the affronts offered by mortals. He had failed to protect his medicine; ergo, his medicine would fail him, either from inability to help or because of resentment.

Meekly, more philosophical than his young friend, remained calm outwardly, but his heart ached as he brooded over the plight of the white girl. Ballou's mind was crowded with feverish plans, all of which proved fatally defective once he sought to analyze them. When he slept for a few minutes at a time it was to dream of calamities. Stark black figures rushed at him and demanded back their scalps. Nell Marks swept through the woods like a ghost and did not heed his despairing call for her to pause and wait for him. Tamaque was ever landing at the bay. The Trade Knife was bending over him and laughing sardonically.

He quit his blanket before sunrise and sat by the dull coals. He watched the coming of the dawn with despairing eyes. There was no staying the inexorable march of the sun, and he was convinced the new day would develop the ultimate sorrow for him.

The village came to life. Before the mists had been driven from the marshlands several bands of scouts were making off in different directions. An unexpected bit of activity was the departure of several canoes down the lake. With a mirthless laugh Ballou said to Meekly:

"Scouts by land and water in search of men who are now in their camp. Would to God we were out there somewhere with Nell Marks along!"

"The finding of the scalps is bothering old Pontiac. If he doesn't believe his own skunks are guilty, then he has to believe a band of whites, or Injuns, is snooping around this camp."

Their talk was interrupted by the arrival of some meat, all cooked. As they were finishing their breakfast they were visited by Pontiac, Ninivois, and Take.

"Some game," Meekly had time to warn before resuming the sullen rôle of prisoner.

Pontiac was worried and showed it despite all efforts to appear at ease. He could control his strong features, but his eyes glanced nervously from Ballou to Rickards and back again repeatedly. With the circumlocution that is characteristic of the red man he delayed revealing the true purpose of his visit, and announced:

"The Trade Knife will be glad to know we have sent men by water to look for Tamaque and carry Pontiac's talk to him. They will go to Presqu' Isle if they do not meet him on the lake. They will go, part of them, to Pitt and others to Great Island, if they do not find his camp at Presqu' Isle. They will tell him his son is here, and that the Three Fires will burn brighter when the chief of the Unalachtigo comes and sits by it."

"He will come soon," said Ballou.

"Pontiac has sent men into the woods to look for the men who killed the Leni-lenape," the chief added.

"They are some of the rangers from the Alleghany," spoke up Ninivois. "They dress and fight like red men."

"Then send many warriors after them," said Ballou. "For they are very brave. A few sleeps before the Knife came here they killed many of Tamaque's braves at Bushy Run, near the Forbes war-road. The Knife still believes the scalps were mounted by red men, that the scalps came from the heads of the Leni-lenape. But what the Knife does not understand is this: What Indians are there who could kill the Leni-lenape? All the tribes are friendly to Tamaque and Pontiac. There may be young warriors, who are ashamed to go back to their huts and face the women unless they have some coup to make a new song about. Such young men might kill our friends and say the hair belonged to a Mohawk."

"My Ottawas did not kill the men of the Unalachtigo," harshly declared Pontiac.

"The Knife does not believe they did. He will tell the same words to Tamaque," said Ballou. "But Tamaque may think queer things."

Ninivois and Take had been taking notice of the Beaver. His morose bearing told them something was preying on his mind. Ninivois asked him—

"Has my Seneca brother dreamed of a ghost?"

"The Seneca is sad because the hair of brave men was thrown on a fire where meat is boiled," replied the Beaver much to Ballou's dismay.

"How does the Seneca know it was the hair of brave men?" quickly demanded Pontiac.

"Those who put it on hoops were brave men, or they could not have killed the Leni-lenape. They would not carry away the hair of cowards."

"How does the Seneca know it was Unalachtigo hair?" sternly insisted Pontiac.

Ballou trembled, then breathed more freely as the Beaver answered—

"Last night it was whispered in his ear while he dreamed."

This explanation was satisfactory to a red mind. Pontiac made much of dreams in influencing his warriors. Like every other Indian he believed a dream invariably was the agency through which supernatural powers allowed a warrior to read the future, or solve the enigmas of yesterday. But a man might say he dreamed when he had not.

"Perhaps a wicked spirit whispered to the Seneca," he suggested.

Black Beaver had had his say and remained mute, and staring at the ground. Pontiac now came to the real purpose of his visit. He asked Ballou—

"Has the child of the *manitos* made any medicine talk since he stood by the dead men?"

"He has made no talk."

Ballou wished his visitors would depart.

"The Trade Knife seeks the truth about his father's dead warriors. Let him ask the child of the *manitos*."

Ballou called out—

"Rickards, any Indians crowding in?"

"Too many."

"He says many Indians are coming," said Ballou.

"Pontiac heard him. Now let the Knife ask him who killed the four men," directed the chief.

His tone forbade any evasion.

Realizing it would be dangerous to attempt any deceit Ballou nerved himself to face the calamity his next query might precipitate. Black Beaver, while greatly depressed by the incident of the burned scalps, was not oblivious to the danger threatening his friends. Hot hate, too, against Pontiac, filled his heart. He cast about to create a diversion. His quick gaze noted an Indian emerging from the western woods. He carried no arms and wore only a breechclout. He was a runner, engaged to carry messages over long distances and leave fighting for others. Even as Ballou was opening his mouth to put the question the Beaver sounded the discovery-cry and pointed to the approaching figure.

"He comes from Detroit!" muttered Pontiac as he watched the man.

Ninivois and Take started to meet the runner, then remembered their dignity, and copied the calm bearing of their chief, who now stood with folded arms.

Warriors called out to the runner and pointed to where Pontiac stood. Ninivois exclaimed—

"He is one of my children!"

The Fox came to a halt and stood in silence before Pontiac.

"What does the swift runner of the brave Fox people have to say?" quietly asked the overchief. "Has Detroit been taken while Pontiac is at Sandusky? Has Gladwin received many more men while Pontiac is away?"

"Detroit is not yet taken, great Pontiac. No more white men have come in big canoes to make the fort stronger. Little Elk comes with a talk from the Rat."

"Pontiac's ears are open. Let Little Elk speak."

"The Rat comes to see a white woman. He sends Little Elk ahead to say he will be here after one more sleep."

"He will be welcome at our fires. Let the Elk go to any of the meat-kettles and say he is a friend of Pontiac."

After the runner had departed in search of food and tobacco Pontiac said to Ballou:

"The heart of the Trade Knife will be very glad. He will soon see his friend the Rat. They can talk about their hunting beyond the Ohio and their fights with the Cherokee."

"We shall have a big talk," replied Ballou, and attempting to simulate much joy.

"—— and brimstone!" muttered Meekly.

"What does the prisoner say?" sternly inquired Pontiac.

"He talks to his medicine," explained Ballou.

CHAPTER IX

THE RAT COMES AND GOES

BALLOU was calm and composed now that uncertainty had given way to certainty. The arrival of the Rat would reveal the white men's ruse to Pontiac. His margin for action was very narrow. Yet until the Rat came the Trade Knife was entitled to represent Tamaque. He spoke to Richards and told him to follow.

"Where you going?" Meekly anxiously asked.

"To talk with Nell Marks."

"They won't let you."

"They will. They must. She belongs to Tamaque until he has received the fifty guns. As Tamaque's adopted son I shall demand to see her. She belongs to Tamaque and he would expect his son to make sure she is alive and well."

"Then fix it so we can skip out at once. We oughter try tonight. It's got so I can't stand this staying hitched to a tree much longer. My legs getting all cramped up."

"I'm thinking of something that promises to turn out to be a good plan," said Ballou. "Faint trail at first, but it's being beaten down into a path mighty fast."

Then to the Conestoga he added:

"My red brother shall pay the Ottawas for burning the scalps. Let him stay here with the prisoner. Soon we shall strike. We shall try to steal the white woman tonight, or early tomorrow morning. If there is any milk (rum) in camp I will trade for some and make a feast for the warriors so we can get away while they are drunk."

"The last of the Conestogas does not wait here for a chance to run away," was Black Beaver's bitter answer. "He waits to make his medicine strong by breaking off an ax in the head of an Ottawa."

"He shall save his ax, but break many heads," soothed Ballou. "Tonight, or tomorrow morning while the camp sleeps, Enoch. Morning will be best, I believe."

"Don't let old Pontiac git to talking high," growled Meekly. "He's counting too much on Tamaque's help to be uppish with you."

With Rickards lounging at his side and fumbling his wampum string Ballou made his way through the camp until he spied Pontiac lying on a robe in the sun and smoking his adulterated tobacco. With a smile that made his painted face appear very ghastly Ballou seated himself opposite the chief and was promptly offered the pipe. After puffing to the four wind quarters, the earth, and the sun Ballou announced:

"The Knife's heart is happy. He knows his friend, the Rat, will soon be here, and the child of the *manitos* has again said Tamaque will come soon. The Knife would make a feast for Pontiac's brave men. Tamaque will bring much that is good to trade, as he has taken much from white cabins, and he gives with an open hand when the Knife asks. Let the warriors have a little milk tonight and tell them it is a gift from the Knife to show there is no anger in his heart for what they tried to do to the prisoner."

Pontiac smoked slowly and considered the proposal for several minutes. At last he said:

"There is some milk hidden in the woods where my children can not find it. A little milk would warm their hearts. They will be glad to know the Trade Knife is not angry with them. Just now they wish to go to their hunting grounds and smoke much meat for Winter. They are like little children. Pontiac has told them they need not meat for Winter, for we shall find all we can eat inside of Fort Detroit. The milk will give them a fighting heart. Tamaque can trade for it when he comes. But only a part of them can drink tonight. When all drink even Pontiac has hard work to make them hear. Tamaque's son can have anything Pontiac has. Sleeping Wolf shall send out hunters so there will be much meat for feasting. Some of my Chippewas shall arrange the moccasin game so the camp can be separated into those who drink and those who wait until the next feast, perhaps tomorrow night."

"It is good," said Ballou. "Great is Pontiac, chief of all tribes once Detroit is taken. Now I must go and look at the white woman my father sent here. When he comes he will ask the Knife, 'Is the woman well? Is she strong and ready to walk?' The Knife's tongue must have an answer."

He rose to depart, as if visiting the prisoner had been a part of his daily routine.

Pontiac's eyes opened wide and then all but closed.

"The white woman would be alone," he murmured. "She is kept in a cabin away from the village and camp."

"It is not for the woman to say what she would have. She is my father's prisoner until the Rat takes her and my father takes the new guns. The Knife must see she is not sick, for Tamaque would be sad if the Rat refused to make the trade. Tamaque wants her to walk in the woods each day, so she will be strong."

"She walks each day," said Pontiac. "The two men leave her by herself. She will not try to escape. She has heard the wolves howling at night."

"Tamaque is not here. His son must see the white woman and the new guns," stoutly persisted the Knife.

"It is better to leave her alone," declared Pontiac.

"If the Trade Knife did not know Pontiac to be a mighty warrior and great chief he would begin to think the girl had run away to the wolves, or had been killed," coldly retorted Ballou.

"It is a good son who remembers his father's wishes," surrendered Pontiac, rising. "We will go and count the guns and look at the white woman. But this will be the first time Pontiac has seen her since she was put in the cabin."

Ballou had planned on seeing the girl alone, and for a moment he was dismayed at the chief's proposal. Then he remembered how thoroughly he was disguised by the Conestoga's paint. He would bide his time in revealing his identity so that the girl would not betray them by any show of emotion. Already his message had prepared her for his coming. Yet he would have preferred to have had any other Indian in North America accompany him than to have had Pontiac witness their meeting. Keeping Rickards by his side he walked behind Pontiac through the Wyandotte village. But as soon as they were clear of the huts Rickards ran ahead, crying:

"White woman. Yaller hair."

A quarter of a mile from the village stood the girl's prison, a stout cabin set close to the forest. The door was open and there was no sign of the two guards. Pontiac showed no concern, and briefly explained—

"She walks alone."

They came to the doorway, and Ballou, nearly overwhelmed by emotion, entered and glanced about the room. New blankets, filched from some trader's stock, covered a couch of dried grass. There was a piece of a log that served as a stool. In a corner was a kettle of water and a drinking-gourd. These comprised the furnishings. Piled against one end of the room was a quantity of new muskets, some Pontiac had received from his well-wishers in New Orleans. To gain time for concealing his feelings Ballou began to count the guns.

"They are good guns," said Pontiac as Ballou paused in his count to examine one very carefully.

"They are strong guns. They will shoot straight," agreed Ballou, indulging in exaggeration for the muskets were faulty of barrel. "Now let us look for the woman."

Pontiac, however, would not hear of any trespass on the girl's privacy in the woods.

"The woman walks alone," he explained. "Until it is known what Tamaque will do with her she is as safe in Pontiac's camp as in a white cabin. Behind the cabin is a growth of tall trees, pleasant and cool when the sun is hot. No warrior, not even the guards, ever enters there. The guards keep outside and see she does not wander deeper into the woods and get lost. We will sit here. She will come back."

Ballou fought down his impatience, seated himself in the doorway and lighted his pipe. It seemed unreal that the quest commenced at the ruins of the cabin on the Forbes road should have terminated at last. Pontiac sprawled on the ground and idly watched the cloud-flecked sky and dreamed of conquest. Rickards remained in the cabin for a few minutes, and when he came out he was carrying one of the new muskets. Pontiac voiced no protest. Ballou said——

"Tamaque will count that gun as one given into his hands."

"No!" decisively objected Pontiac. "It shall be the Ottawa's gift to the child of the *manitos*. Pontiac has other guns."

Rickards paid no attention to the two men. He was examining the gun with a glint of recollection in his sunken eyes. Very soon he lost interest in the musket and stepped to the door and looked into the cabin. He was seeking the white woman with the yellow hair. Failing to find her he started off into the pines back of the cabin. Pontiac made no protest as the white man entered the patch of timber which was taboo even to the greatest of the Ottawas. After a short time a guard came running from the woods and on beholding Pontiac respectfully reported:

"A white man walks with the woman. He wears Pontiac's wampum and listens to the voices of the *manitos*."

"It is good," tersely replied Pontiac.

The guard turned back to resume patroling the border of the pines.

Ballou gave a convulsive start, which Pontiac did not happen to observe, then gritted his teeth and quelled the great desire to cry out her name. For he was hearing her grave voice talking to Rickards. It reminded him of how a mother might talk to a little child. They were returning to the cabin, and she was saying:

"You must try to remember things. You remember the gun. Soon you will remember other things. God is good and you are his child."

Then she was turning the corner of the cabin, and was halting and with dilated eyes was staring at Pontiac, and the hideously painted creature smoking trade-tobacco. Her fair face was thinner than Ballou had ever seen it before, and there were little lines of misery about the corners of her eyes and across her forehead.

Her usual high color had been bleached out by fears, incarceration, and the lack of sunshine and strong winds. Her hair, flaxen rather than a true yellow, was coiled neatly on top of her shapely head. Her simple gown was torn and stained by the hurried travel north, and on her feet she wore Indian moccasins. She was worn and pale, but Ballou rejoiced there was nothing in her physical appearance to denote weakness. There was an abiding melancholy graven in her fine face. perhaps put there by the memories of what she had witnessed at the Perkins cabin. He did not believe she knew about her father's death. Rickards never took his gaze from her.

PONTIAC rose and without glancing at the girl said:

"The Trade Knife has counted the guns and has looked on his father's prisoner. It is time to go back to the camp and tell the warriors the Knife gives them a feast."

Ballou quit the doorway and fussed with his pipe until after the girl had entered the cabin. When she was screened from Pontiac's sharp gaze Ballou said:

"The Knife is pleased to see the prisoner looking so strong. The Rat will be pleased."

Then in English and pretending to be addressing Rickards he said:

"He is ready who writes on bark and sends it away and then receives it back, and burns it in the fire. Let her be ready who received the bark."

Pontiac pricked up his ears as he caught some of the speech. From inside the cabin came the sound of the gourd dropping on the hard-packed earthern floor.

"Does the Knife make a medicine talk to the child of the *manitos?*" curiously asked Pontiac.

"He tells him to burn bark if he would make a medicine to the sun."

The prisoner appeared in the doorway, her hands clutching the ends of the logs for support. Her gaze was lowered to avoid the piercing glances of the chief's somber eyes. Turning to Rickards she softly said, "Very soon all will be well, I hope. Very soon a friend will come."

Rickards stared at her worshipfully and exclaimed:

"Yaller hair. Pretty hair."

Ballou commanded:

"Come Rickards. My sun medicine tells me we shall be up early in the morning."

He dared not glance again at the girl, for already Pontiac was trying to patch together such English words as he could catch out of Ballou's rapid utterance. Rickards did not pay any attention to his friend's command but remained watching the woman and nursing the new musket. Pontiac stepped one side and motioned for Ballou to precede him.

Feverish with suppressed excitement and wildly wishing the hours away, Ballou hurried through the village and into the camps.

"The Knife has. the legs of the deer," remonstrated Pontiac, who did not relish such unseemly haste.

"He must return to his prisoner. The Black Beaver will wish to walk among the fires."

"The Beaver heard evil birds whispering in his dreams. They told him lies about scalps," angrily declared Pontiac.

"The Knife does not know what the Beaver dreams. He only knows the False-face medicine is very wise and tells him things that are hidden to most warriors."

"Can it tell when Detroit will fall?" asked Pontiac, sceptical yet curious.

"It may tell him that. The Knife does not know. It told him the four scalps came from Leni-lenape heads and were painted by red men."

"Then it lied," harshly declared Pontiac. "Or if the scalps came from Leni-lenape heads they were taken a long time ago. If the Beaver tells such things none of the Mingoes will want his medicine."

Pontiac left him when they reached the central fire and Ballou lost no time in rejoining his friends.

"Did you see her?" eagerly asked Meekly.

"I saw her, but Pontiac stood at my elbow. I could not speak to her. She did not know me until I said something in English to Rickards. I told her through Rickards to be ready, that we should try to escape tomorrow morning. I have promised a feast to the savages if Pontiac will furnish the rum. He will let only part of them drink tonight for fear they will do each other mischief. I bought the rum on Tamaque's credit."

For a second Meekly's broad face almost threatened a grin.

"If we can git loose before that old chunk of p'izen comes I'll laff most vastly to think of all the explaining him and old Pontiac will have to make," he mumbled. "But I'll go crazy as Rickards if we don't make a break soon. If it wa'n't for Nell Marks I'd have grabbed a gun or ax and sounded my war-whoop long before this."

"I'm as keen as you are, old friend. If this day could only end! I was cool enough until I saw her. Then I flew to pieces. Black Beaver seems down in the mouth."

The last was prompted by the dejected appearance of the Conestoga, who did not stir or display any interest in the outcome of Ballou's venture.

"I'm gitting more skeered of what he'll do then I am of what old Pontiac may do," growled Meekly. "All the time you's gone he's sat there like a knot on a log. He's planning some red foolishness. That's the trouble with a Injun. He can't look beyond the thing he wants to do next. Just now the Beaver don't want to do nothing 'cept raise —— and tophet."

Ballou was concerned. Meekly's forceful remarks contained much truth. If committed to a plan of revenge the Beaver might jeopardize all plans by premature action. The Indian, seated some twenty feet from the fire, had his head all but covered by his blanket. Ballou went to him and said:

"Let my red brother's heart grow strong. Soon we shall steal the white woman away, and that will hurt Pontiac more than the loss of many scalps. It will turn the Rat against him. It will make Tamaque very angry. The Ga-go-sa will smile when they see the woman escaping. They will say the Beaver is very cunning to trick Pontiac."

"Only scalps will pay for the scalps the Ottawa dog burned," hissed the Beaver.

"We shall take scalps when we steal the woman," grimly promised Ballou.

A sudden explosion of yelps and sharp howls, starting at the central fire and rapidly caught up by every group, brought the Beaver to his feet, his hand on his ax. Ballou glided back to Meekly and saw that the rifles were at hand. Sleeping Wolf passed within hailing distance, and Ballou called out—

"Have more of the Wolf's scouts come back?"

Pausing for a moment the Wolf replied: "The warriors play the moccasin game of the Chippewas to see who will drink milk tonight. The Wolf sends out men to get more meat. It will be a very big feast. The Knife's heart is big. Pontiac has said the milk is his gift to the Three Fires and their friends."

Ballou drew a deep breath and dropped limply to the ground. Meekly complained:

"It's just one nerve-jolt after another. Better take me farther from camp when the drinking begins. Tell Pontiac you're afraid some of his children will lose their heads and try to cut off mine."

"That would never do. We must risk it here. Pontiac would put a guard of sober men over us to protect us. We must have no guards."

"Then let it come quick and be over with, or you'll have two crazy men on your hands," sighed the veteran.

Sleeping Wolf's orders sent several groups of hunters into the woods. While they were whooping and dancing on their way Rickards came up and passed a piece of bark to Ballou. It was a message from the Marks girl, and read:

> I knew Your voice. I think You tried to Tell me to be Ready in the Morning. The cabin is Always guarded by 2 Savages. I pray for Your coming.
> N. M.

Ballou burned the bark and muttered:

"And the Rat is coming. I wonder when he will arrive?"

Black Beaver, having noiselessly approached, eagerly asked—

"Does my brother make a new medicine?"

"New, and very strong. It must be strong to stop the Rat from reaching this camp before we have run into the woods."

"The Rat is a big man among the Fox Indians," muttered the Conestoga. "He can lead almost as many warriors as Ninivois. Pontiac is glad to listen to him. His father was a white trader, and he has the white man's medicine; but his heart is all red. He is a brave man. His hair in a hoop would be a brave coup for a man to count."

Ballou was much pleased to observe the Beaver had thrown off his silent, morbid mood, and sought to continue the talk; but the Beaver had had his say and remained mute. Yet his was no longer the silence of despair, for his small eyes were glowing with fierce lights. Ignoring Ballou's talk he suddenly quit the fire to wander among the warriors.

PREPARATIONS were already being completed for determining who should be among the drinkers, and who should remain sober and prevent mutilation and murder. The savages had been divided into two groups with Ninivois and Take selected as the captains. Two men, skilled in the Chippewa game of "moccasin," were to play six games, and the group represented by the winner was to have the new milk, while the loser's band was to guard all weapons and police the camp.

Four moccasins were arranged in a row on a blanket. Each player in turn was to juggle and hide a bullet under each moccasin. One bullet was marked, and the opposing player was to guess under which moccasin the marked bullet was concealed. The player successfully hiding the bullet scored a win. Each group was massed behind its man the moment the knife was tossed to see who should first show his skill in concealing.

Ninivois's man was to make the first essay. Inveterate gamblers that they were the two groups began placing wagers, beginning with knives and concluding with muskets. As the excitement increased warriors recklessly wagered their all, the trinkets and weapons being heaped in a common mass.

The man who was to hide the bullets palmed them between his five fingers, and a drum directly behind him began to beat. Take's man, the guesser, picked up the slender thirty-six inch striking-stick. The drummer began singing a moccasin-game song, and the man, who was to conceal, rapidly lifted the toe of each moccasin with his left hand and dropped a bullet from his right hand. The man with the striking-stick never shifted his gaze from his opponent's chest, for while the face usually remained impassive the average player could not refrain from holding his breath for a second when dropping the marked bullet.

So absorbed were the spectators that none was conscious of the Conestoga's presence. Just as the striking-stick failed to locate the marked bullet and the warriors were relaxing for a few moments before the next play the Beaver ended his search by reaching forward and touching the naked shoulder of Little Elk, the Rat's messenger. The fellow was unwilling to give the Beaver any attention, for it was his side that had won the first play and he was hungry for the milk.

The Beaver persisted, and demanded—

"The Rat comes after one sleep and before the next?"

"He may travel fast, he may travel slow," jerked out Little Elk, moving to resume watching the game.

"The Trade Knife, who gives the milk, sends the Beaver to find out. The Rat is his good friend. Has the Little Elk no talk to send back to the Knife?"

The runner became complaisant, for a man who could give milk to so many warriors must be a very big man.

"The Rat will come before the sun goes down. He will be drunk by the time the stars shine."

"Little Elk said he would come 'after another sleep'," reminded the Beaver, his gaze growing ferocious.

"The Elk spoke the words the Rat put in his mouth," mumbled the runner, shrinking back from the Conestoga. "Now the Knife asks for a talk the Elk says what is in his heart. He knows how the Rat travels. He knows there is a white woman here the Rat has traded for. He has seen him travel before when only a French-Indian woman was at the end of the journey. The Rat always comes quicker than he says he will when traveling to meet a woman. Tell the Knife his friend will be here before the sun hides his light."

He broke away and sought to squirm through the dense mass, as the drum began its dull challenge and the moccasin song was renewed.

Black Beaver composedly hummed an ancient Conestoga hunting-song as he went to rejoin his friends. The white men noted the change in his bearing and Meekly remarked—

"He's gitting over his —— foolishness."

The Beaver picked up the wooden mask and placed an ear to the lips. His form straightened and his voice was vibrant with happiness as he announced:

"The Beaver's medicine is kind. Once more it talks to him. It tells him to walk alone in the woods and shoot some meat for tonight's feast. It says it is bad for the Beaver and his brothers to eat more of the meat that Ottawa dogs have handled."

"If the Beaver is not very wise his foot will trip. If his foot gets lame his brothers and the white woman will die at Sandusky," warned Ballou, who was growing suspicious of the man's purpose.

"The foot will not trip. The Beaver will not walk lame when he comes back from the hunting."

Refusing to say more he picked up his blanket and threw it over his shoulders, examined his rifle, and departed. The white men were puzzled at his taking a blanket. Hunters did not thus encumber themselves when seeking game near a camp.

The Beaver skirted the mass of excited gamblers and passed through the camp until he reached the western side, when he halted and seated himself by a deserted camp-kettle. For a minute he stared about him and made sure none of the warriors were near to observe him. The moccasin game was the focal point of every man's attention. The Beaver stretched his arms lazily and allowed his blanket to fall on the ground behind him. After a moment he rose, gathered up his blanket over one arm and continued his journey.

He passed along the western shore of the bay and into the woods that stretched in thin growth down the rim of land that formed the northern boundary of the bay. When he was out of sight of the camp he arranged his blanket over his shoulder, only now he carried under it an Ottawa bow and three hunting-arrows. He had gathered these up with his blanket when quitting the deserted fire.

He rapidly traversed the thin line of timber and emerged among some low bushes on the lake shore. The lake was scarcely ruffled, and the Beaver's heart rejoiced. There was nothing to prevent a canoe from the north from making swift progress. And it was toward the north he was ever directing his gaze. The sun was two hours beyond the midday mark before his body stiffened and he shaded his eyes with a hand. In the north was a dot.

Like a cat watching the approach of a bird he crouched low and alternately tightened and relaxed his superb muscles. Very slowly the dot grew into a canoe, with the sunlight glistening at times on the wet paddles. There were two men in the light craft, and for a few seconds the Beaver scowled hideously and wished he had appropriated more arrows. He should have known, he told himself, that the Rat would be too lazy to come alone. For a long time the canoe seemed to be stationary, with bow toward the hidden watcher. Then the heads of the two paddlers ceased to be in alinement and became separate dots, and the Beaver's heart grew cold as he realized the canoe had swerved toward the south-east. The success of his "hunting" trip necessitated that the Rat should not paddle around to the mouth of the bay, but land near where the Beaver was hiding and proceed toward the camp afoot.

A bit of a breeze stirred the sumac leaves over his head, and he moistened a finger and held it up to test the air currents. The side of the finger facing the north instantly grew cold. Far out beyond the canoe the lake was dappled with patches of white. The wind from the north quickened, and the canoe swung back and ran before it and toward the Beaver.

Now the Beaver could make out the occupants, a half-breed and a full blood. This much was obvious from their attire. The breed was dressed in a laced coat of French make, reminiscent of French rule at Detroit, and had his black hair held back from his eyes by a band of red cloth. His hair was decorated with eagle feathers befitting one who had counted many coups. Like his companion he had made his face fearful to contemplate with stripes of red, white, and black paint. The full-blood wore nothing but a breech-clout and a few feathers.

Tiny waves began to jump upon the spit of sand, soon pursued by white-crested larger waves. With a final drive of their paddles the two voyagers sent their canoe into the shallows and leaped overboard into the smother of white water and lifted their craft high on the shore.

The Beaver's leg muscles twitched. He was within easy arrow-range, but the wind was blowing in his face. He worked backward into the timber and took up a position close by a deep-grooved path. He could hear the two men conversing—the Rat arrogantly giving commands about the scanty luggage and the other begging for some tobacco.

The two men skirted the growth for a short distance until they came to the entrance of the path, which they entered. The Rat was in the lead when they passed within ten feet of the Beaver, yet the Conestoga witheld his arrows. He was not yet ready to kill. Without paint the Rat's face would have been bestial, for he had inherited the vices of a white father and had reacted to the worst in his mother's people.

The Beaver trailed them for nearly half the distance through the growth and then left the path and moved rapidly. He was soon abreast of them, for the Rat's legs were not recovered from the cramped position enforced by long canoe travel; and the full-blood, a Fox, was carrying all their camping equipment. The Beaver doubled his pace and drew ahead of them and then swung back to the path and discarded his blanket and rifle.

It was the work of a moment to string the bow and fit an arrow and grip the other two between his teeth. It was a good bow, made of ash and in one piece, and reenforced with sinews.

The Beaver had selected it from a score that had passed under his observation as he slowly walked through the camp. He had chosen it because it was lacking in decorations and could not be easily identified as belonging to any particular warrior. It would be unwise to use a bow whose owner could be named, and who might easily prove an alibi because of his presence at the moccasin game, thereby proving the bow had been stolen. The Beaver had sought a strong serviceable bow, such as any young warrior would possess, but whose lack of achievements would prohibit any embellishment.

The Beaver stood behind a tree beside the trail, his eager gaze fixed on a turn in the path a short distance away. Soon he heard the loud voice of the Rat, boasting of his various murders and thefts, and the guttural request of the other for tobacco. The Rat, walking less stiffly, turned the bend in the path. He carried his musket only and was walking carelessly; for was he not near the village of the mighty Pontiac?

For a few moments the doomed man was removed from his companion's line of vision. The Beaver drew the cord back of his ear and released the shaft. It struck the Rat low in the neck and stuck out several inches behind under his long back hair. Coughing and spluttering the Rat went down and vainly tried to yell out. The full-blood heard enough to cause him to drop his pack and come around the turn with an ax in his hand.

The Beaver brought him to the ground with an arrow through the body. The man raised a howl, but the third arrow quickly stilled his outcries. Dropping the bow in the path the Beaver carefully smoothed out the forest floor where he had stood, and in another minute was running swiftly through the woods in a long half-circle.

WHEN the Beaver emerged from the southern wall of woods he had a small deer slung across his powerful shoulders. He was still humming his hunting-song as he slowly walked through the camp and observed that Ninivois's band had won the moccasin game and were entitled to be drunk that night.

"You have hunted well, Black Beaver," complimented Ballou as the Conestoga dropped the deer by the fire.

"The hunting was good, white brother. We have clean meat."

There was an exhiliration in the Conestoga's bearing which he could not conceal. Ballou suspiciously said——

"The Beaver's medicine has been talking in his ear."

"The Beaver's heart is light. The Ga-go-sa whispers the Rat has gone on a long journey and that my white brother shall not listen for the sound of his steps coming to Pontiac's camp."

"It is not time to hear the steps of the Rat. He walks soft. He will not come until after another sleep," reminded Ballou.

"Little Elk, the runner, talked with a foolish tongue. The Rat will not come even if my brothers wait through the first hunting-snow until the next new grass."

He carefully selected the driest of the fuel and heaped it on the fire.

The white men exchanged startled glances. Meekly asked—

"What will stop the Rat?"

The flames were now leaping high and the wood was crackling furiously and spitting showers of sparks. The Conestoga swiftly pulled two hanks of hair from under his blanket and dropped them into the heart of the fire, and triumphantly answered:

"Can two men walk around without their scalps? Our white brother does, but he has much medicine and was not shot through the neck and body with long hunting-arrows. When Pontiac burned the scalps of brave men he made my medicine angry and it would not help me. Look! Now my medicine will talk to me. The Beaver burns the hair of the man Pontiac looked to for help. It is good!"

"—— if he ain't met and done for the Rat!" hoarsely exclaimed Meekly, divided between admiration for the bold act and fear of the consequences. "But they will find the bodies."

Ballou glared at the Conestoga, then realized the uselessness of betraying any emotion. It was imperative that he learn the details of the tragedy.

"Will the Beaver tell his brother where the men were killed? There were two scalps. Perhaps the Beaver took two from one head."

"There were two men," proudly replied the Conestoga. "They were killed in the woods between the lake and the bay. They came up a path, the Rat ahead. The Beaver shot them both. I have made a new song."

"You left them in the trail?" whispered Ballou, horrified at this new menace to his plans.

"Where the first warrior to follow the path will find them," exulted the Conestoga. "Now my medicine tells me very soon I shall turn myself into a snake."

"—— your medicine!" snarled Meekly.

"You have sent the white woman to the torture post," hissed Ballou. "Now the Rat is dead and can be found in the path. Pontiac will not give guns to Tamaque. Tamaque will be very angry. Why did you not hide the bodies? Then you would have done a big thing. As it is, you have done a bad thing. When I gave you food at the Shawnee Cabins I did not think I would be paid like this."

"Don't waste your breath on him," groaned Meekly. "Just pray for the night to hustle along. If the bodies ain't found till after dusk we may have a chance to make a try for it."

The Conestoga opened his paint bag and hung up his small mirror and began touching up his face; and as he worked he softly sang his new song, which the white men translated to be:

Scarlet is its head,
  A Fox woman is wailing,
Scarlet is its head,
  A Rat died near the marsh.

Ballou, plunged in despair, did not take heed of the song's hidden meaning. Meekly, more objective, lifted his head and glared questioningly at the singer. He eagerly whispered:

"Wake up, Ballou. He shot the two cusses with arrers. 'Scarlet is its head,' means a arrer. There may be a chance that we have a trifle more time then we've been thinking. Make him talk."

Ballou, startled out of his misery, wheeled on the Beaver, but wisely compelled his tongue to silence until after the Indian had finished his painting. Then he quietly said:

"It is a good song. It will be repeated by many fires and all men will know the Conestoga made it. How many arrows did the Beaver use?"

The Beaver held up three fingers and explained:

"One for the Rat. Two for the other. They are Ottawa hunting-arrows. They will find the bow where the Beaver dropped it. It is an Ottawa bow. Now let Pontiac explain to Ninivois, chief of the Fox warriors, how the Rat, whose mother was a Fox, and a Fox warrior, go among the ghosts with a young Ottawa's arrows in them!"

"Better! Much better," sighed Meekly in great relief. "Still we must git away tonight. No knowing what will happen after the bodies are found."

Ballou wrote on a bit of bark—

Tonight if possible.

He looked about for his messenger. Rickards was wandering among the Indians, breaking up group after group by his mere presence. Ballou strolled among disconsolate losers and hilarious winners and, coming up to Rickards, curtly commanded——

"Bring more wood."

Rickards gathered up a huge armful that a Mingo had just brought from the forest and carried to the fire. Ballou gave him the message and directed—

"Give it to the white woman now."

This was an errand Rickards could be depended upon to execute promptly. Any reference to the Marks girl always filled him with a desire to go to her cabin. He dropped the bark inside his shirt and trotted away, his head held high and his gaze taking no account of the sprawling savages.

Pontiac now came from his hut and talked with Take and arranged for policing the camp during the drinking bout. Already middle-aged warriors were departing to the woods to select some hidden yet accessible spot where all but the bows and muskets could be concealed. For fear their weapons might be snatched from them the police would be armed only with clubs. Because of the chance that rain might fall before the spree was finished, and spoil bow-strings and ruin primings, it had been agreed that all bows and muskets should be stored in Pontiac's cabin.

The winners were heaping gifts of beaded bags, pipes and knives upon the gambler who had won, and the line of cleavage between the fortunate and the disappointed was sharply drawn. The hunters began to return with game for the feasting. To the accompaniment of a Chippewa drum an elderly warrior was improvising a song in honor of the successful gambler. Ballou and Meekly repeatedly glanced at the sun.

Now the elderly warrior had his song ready for rendition, and as his voice began a recital of praise all voices were hushed. The singer had given the name of the gambler and was eulogizing him with no small praise when a peculiar, quavering cry stilled his voice. Men sprang to their feet and stared toward the long timber line. The cry was repeated, and a warrior yelped sharply and pointed. All beheld him now, one of the hunters making a belated return. He was approaching from the northwest side of the camp and was running in a most eccentric manner, bounding from side to side, and occasionally stooping and tossing handfuls of dried grass above his head. Pontiac and Take ceased their conference. Ninivois hurried toward the great leader.

"Who is it?" sharply demanded Ninivois, shading his eyes the better to behold the grotesquely dancing figure.

"The Weasel. One of my Hurons," said Take.

Pontiac announced:

"The Weasel has found something. He is telling us he has found something we should know now."

The hunter, now satisfied he had the camp's undivided attention, ceased his zig-zag running and sped straight for the fires, his voice taking up the shrill yell of discovery. What was more disturbing to Pontiac and his warriors was the mournful howl the hunter added after each staccato yell. He had found something which would be bad news for his companions to learn. Pontiac called out for Sleeping Wolf to see that some of his scouts were armed and to hold them in readiness. The hunter, a young Huron, kept up his yelling and howling until well within the camp.

Take cried out to him:

"The Weasel makes a noise as if he had seen a ghost. Pontiac's ears are open. Give us your talk."

"There are two dead men in the woods! There are two dead men in the woods! Their heads are red!" loudly announced the hunter.

"Does the Weasel know who the dead men are?" calmly asked Pontiac.

"One is a man from the Fox tribe. He is shot with two arrows."

He paused as if to get his breath, in reality to score the highest dramatic effect. Warriors and chiefs waited for his next words.

"Has the Weasel run away from his tongue?" harshly demanded Pontiac.

"The other man is the Rat! He has an arrow through his throat! Both heads are red" (*i. e.*, scalped), was the astounding climax.

Even Pontiac could not conceal the shock this intelligence inflicted. For several moments he dared not trust his voice. Finally he said:

"The Weasel has been asleep and has had a bad dream. Or he has found some milk in the woods and is drunk."

"The Rat and a Fox man are dead in the lake trail," insisted the Weasel. "It is no dream. The Weasel has tasted no milk."

"Let Sleeping Wolf take men and follow the Weasel back to the trail," commanded Pontiac.

"If the Rat and one of my men have been killed it is very bad," spoke up Ninivois. "I will go with them."

"If they are dead their bones shall be covered," cried Pontiac.

He drew his blanket over his head and returned to his hut to meditate on this new misfortune, and to speculate on its effect on his followers. He was deeply troubled by the mystery of it all. There were no Indians nearer than the Long House who were not thoroughly in sympathy with the war he was waging. Sleeping Wolf's scouts had ranged about the camp for many miles and had found no signs of white men. It was all the more baffling to realize the two men had been killed when hunters, as well as scouts, were thick in the forest.

It was as bewildering as had been the appearance of the four painted scalps in the eastern trail after the scouts had passed over it and had found it clean. Those scalps had been mounted by Indians. Now these two men, one who would have been a strong ally, were dead—killed by arrows. Again the evidence pointed to a red man's work.

With the merriment silenced and the disappointment forgotten the savages waited while the Wolf and his scouts trotted after the hunter to vanish in the timber. The last to disappear was Ninivois, second to Pontiac, perhaps, in his influence over the northern tribes.

"—— for breakfast!" Meekly growled, his eyes filling with trouble. "If it could only have been held back for two or three hours! Something's wrong with our medicine."

"It'll spoil their drinking, I'm afraid," Ballou gloomily remarked.

"Not a bit. They'll need their milk to make their hearts strong. Just wait and hear what Pontiac says about it."

Savage joy shone in the Conestoga's eyes as he observed the consternation his coup had caused. And he softly sang:

> "Scarlet is its head,
> A Fox woman is wailing."

THE camp continued silent until a scout reappeared. His wailing voice told the chiefs and warriors that the Weasel had spoken with a straight tongue. At last Ninivois stalked from the woods. Behind him walked men with two stretchers as further testimony to the exactness of the Weasel's statement. Sleeping Wolf and his scouts completed the procession, singing a melancholy death song.

Pontiac hurried on to the scene and was the first to greet Ninivois, saying:

"Their bones shall be covered very deep. There is bad flesh around Sandusky."

The stretchers were placed on the ground by the central fire. Sleeping Wolf removed the blankets and revealed the stark forms of the Rat and his companion. Ninivois already had examined them to learn the nature of their wounds, and with lips clamped tight stood with folded arms while Pontiac and Take investigated. When the war-chief straightened and stepped back Ninivois advanced and removed the arrow from the Rat's neck and held it up and tersely exclaimed—

"Ottawa."

Take of the Hurons touched the two shafts that had killed the Fox and grimly remarked—

"Ottawa."

The Weasel pressed forward and held up the bow brought in on the Rat's stretcher and added—

"Ottawa."

"Does Ninivois and Take believe that one of my children fired those arrows?" demanded the vibrant voice of Pontiac.

"Who knows who fired the arrows, great Pontiac?" retorted Ninivois gloomily. "We only know they are Ottawa hunting-arrows and that the bow is an Ottawa bow."

"Ottawa arrows can be made, or found. No man in this camp killed these two men. If the arrows were Huron, or Shawnee arrows, would my brother say a Shawnee, or a Huron fired them? We all know he would not. Sadness fills my brother's heart, and yet he knows, as all my Ottawas know, that the Rat was the friend of Pontiac and was coming to bring me Fox warriors who did not follow Ninivois. The death of the Rat makes Pontiac's heart very heavy. What will Tamaque say when he comes and finds the Rat has gone among the ghosts and no longer wants the white woman? If Pontiac does not give the guns and end a trade the Rat began then Tamaque will turn back to the Ohio and refuse to help us. Is there any Ottawa so foolish as to drive fresh warriors away from Detroit when the fort is about to surrender? We do not believe so. Pontiac will do this toward covering the bones of the Rat. He will give the guns to Tamaque and turn the white woman over to Ninivois."

He paused and was gratified to observe that his offer was making a deep impression on his lieutenant. Ninivois already commanded all the Fox braves who had shown a willingness for war. The Rat had sufficient influence to bring more of the tribe to Pontiac's aid, including all the breeds who had refused to follow the Fox chief. In parting with the fifty new guns Pontiac would be making a gift; for he could secure no more reenforcements from Ninivois."

"If Ninivois would choose the new guns in place of the white woman, what would Pontiac say?" asked Ninivois.

A hundred guns was more than Pontiac cared to part with, yet the moment was crucial. He replied:

"Then Ninovois shall have the guns, but not those here at Sandusky, for Tamaque must have those. But at Detroit, when we go back, Ninovois shall have the guns and Pontiac will keep the white woman. He can trade her to Gladwin if any Ottawa warriors are held in the fort."

"Ninivois does not say now he will take the guns in place of the woman. He will talk after one sleep," said the chief, wondering if, after all, the possession of the woman would not be a more valuable asset than the muskets. For Fox warriors might be held as prisoners.

"Let Ninivois speak any time he will," gently said Pontiac, hoping the chief would prefer the woman. Then he turned to the silent mass of warriors, and loudly cried:

"Men of the Three Fires and all other brave tribes. This is a very bad business. It makes our hearts very sad. We will give milk to all warriors, a little to each, to take the load off their hearts. Let the two men be placed in the hut of the dead. Let Ninivois and Take follow Pontiac so the three can look into this bad business and learn from our medicines what shall be done."

There was less elasticity in the war-chief's step as he moodily stalked back to his hut, followed by the two chiefs. Nor could the promise of rum dispel the gloom from the camp. It was not the death of the Rat that weighed on the red minds, but the manner in which he had been killed. The Ottawa arrows let suspicion in. The Wyandottes and a scattering of Foxes, Mingoes, and Shawnees gradually came together in one large group and with blankets over their heads sat and smoked in silence, their gaze inclined to be distrustful whenever they glanced at the larger band of Chippewas, Potawatomis, and Ottawas.

The memory of the four scalps found in the trail was in all minds, even as they had worried Pontiac. The killing of the men near the Cuyahoga, and of the two men so near the camp, had passed beyond the ordinary bounds of death by violence and was now tinged with the mysterious. The finding of the scalps so near the camp continued a mystery. In the two tragedies the evidence pointed to two facts: Red men had cured the scalps; and a red man's arrows had slain.

A Shawnee spoke a common thought when he said to his circle—

"When will the two scalps be picked up?"

"Some *manito* is very angry," muttered a Wyandotte.

"The False-faces are angry," shivered a Mingo.

Rickards came blundering through the camp, and even his clouded mind took note of the general silence. He paused on reaching the larger band and stared vacantly at the downcast faces. He passed on to the second assemblage and again halted. The Wyandotte at his feet shivered as if cold and drew his blanket over his head. After Rickards had passed on to find his friends the Wyandotte whispered—

"The *manito* was not angry with us until after his white child came."

There was a minute of silence and then a Mingo, with an uneasy glance toward Black Beaver, remarked, "The *manitos* were not angry until after the Seneca and his False-face came."

A Shawnee raised his voice and boldly declared—

"The white woman has been bad medicine."

From the larger circle an Ottawa proclaimed—

"Our medicine will not be strong until the Trade Knife roasts his prisoner."

Each suggestion found ready favor with many, but it was the Ottawa's declaration that won the largest number of supporters. Even warriors outside the Three Fires hailed it as being the truth. Still no man had the hardihood to take the initiative. All felt that only Pontiac could cope with the crisis now thrust upon them. So they waited while the war-chief and his lieutenants took counsel together. And Ballou and Meekly were also waiting, and counting the minutes as they watched the sun move slowly down the sky.

"It's the first time I ever see the sun git stuck!" groaned Meekly.

Ballou finished filling his pipe and replied—

"This time tomorrow we'll be free, or dead."

"Pontiac's got a big job on his hands to settle before morning," Meekly observed. "He knows that more'n one red mind is thinking queer things about his Ottawas. He's got to smother them idees, or quit fighting."

The Conestoga oracularly spoke up and said:

"There is one path out of the trouble for Pontiac. He will say our brother with the smooth head is the bad medicine. He will come and ask my other brother to build a big fire—not a little fire—under his prisoner. If he must choose between keeping the Wyandottes and the help of Tamaque he will keep the Wyandottes. They are his best fighters. He must hold them fast to the Three Fires, or stop trying to take Fort Detroit."

Meekly gave a harsh laugh and agreed.

"Jarvis, the Injun has hit it right. I'm the only critter they'll dare to burn. Pontiac has made up his mind already. Wonder what Hance Whit is doing 'bout this time."

"They shall never burn you, Enoch," assured Ballou. "They may kill all of us; but we won't die by fire. Hance Whit? He'll be wishing he was with us, let our luck be what it will. Whit is a brave man; a good man to have at your elbow when trouble comes. He makes me fighting mad, but he's a good man in time of trouble."

Rickards came and sat down beside Ballou and announced:

"White woman. She said 'tonight.'"

"You hear that, Enoch? Everything ends tonight, one way or the other."

"Lawdy! But it'll seem good to have a rifle in my paws ag'in," sighed Meekly.

The sun reached the sky-line. Fires were freshened and kettles were hung in the flames to boil. Sleeping Wolf loudly called the names of four men. A general uplifting of heads greeted the summons, and beady eyes glistened with new life. Men might be found dead in the forest, and even a *manito* might be angry; but milk was milk and the red throat always was parched. The conversation began to be more neighborly. Men began to pass back and forth between the two groups. Members of the Three Fires and their allies found a common ground of thought in declaring that all would be well if the white prisoner of the Trade Knife were burned.

Sleeping Wolf led the four men into the woods, and his going was the signal for grunts of anticipation and much smacking of lips. There was but little talk until the Wolf reappeared, the four men coming behind him and bringing two large kegs of rum; then began a babel of guttural voices and a general stirring about of the men. Pontiac had decided shrewdly in choosing to risk a general drinking bout to allowing half of his followers to brood over their superstitious fears.

Elderly warriors detailed for the work passed briskly from fire to fire to collect knives and axes in blankets and hide them in the woods. The muskets and bows were carried to Pontiac's hut by young men, who whooped as they ran.

The sun vanished and the kettles of meat began to boil. Sleeping Wolf arranged the two kegs and tapped one, and won loud applause by announcing that each warrior was to have a dram while the meat was cooking.

With much stamping of feet the men formed in a long line and began filing by the keg. When half the line had been served the Weasel, impatiently awaiting his turn, chanced to turn his keen hunter's gaze toward the mouth of the bay. His loud shout startled the savages.

"Fire on the water!" he excitedly cried.

Ballou heard the warning; red men and white stared toward the east. There was no mistaking the point of light twinkling on the horizon.

"Is it a star?" Ballou whispered to Meekly.

"There comes another one," grunted Meekly.

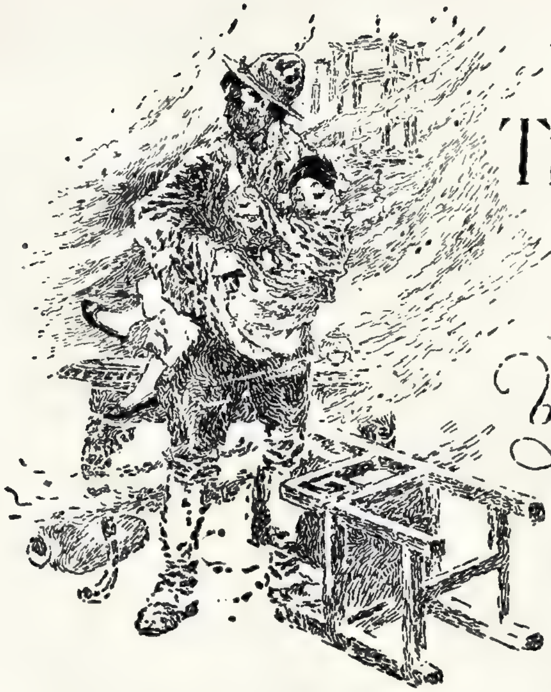
There appeared another, and yet more, until a round dozen were dancing over the water.

"Tamaque is coming! Tamaque is coming!" shouted the savages in chorus.

"Tamaque is coming. He will be here soon," hissed the Conestoga; and he began to collect his war toggery and to wrap his wooden mask in his blanket.

"The Trade Knife is coming," muttered Ballou as he slipped Meekly's wrist bonds and loosened the neck noose so it could be instantly removed. "I've freshened the priming, Enoch."

TO BE CONTINUED



The SPIRIT of the FLAMES

by Clyde B. Hough

Author of "Justice," "The Will to Go On," etc.

WE WERE playing cribbage. It was my opponent's turn to play. He drew a card from his left hand and held it aloft, suspended. I had been engrossed in the game. His action caught my eye, took my mind off the game and I became aware that every man in the room—some dozen or more all told—had stopped talking. They had ceased their various activities and were standing about in odd poses, expectant, tense.

It was a tension that could have been felt even had the room been in darkness. My opponent was gazing over my shoulder and beyond. All that I have described so far had taken place, I think, in less than a second.

I turned my head and saw Red Donnelly shoot out his left hand, curved like a talon. It hooked around the back of Kelp's head. The head was jerked violently forward and at the same instant, Donnelly brought his right hand swiftly upward, wide open. The heel of Donnelly's palm struck Kelp's chin and, with a rasping movement, passed up across the lips and then against the nose, pointing it painfully toward the forehead.

I can close my eyes now, after fifteen years, and see it all. The pool room, the library, the card room and the canteen, all under one long, low roof. I can see a fellow with a magazine open in his hand. Three or four others with cues in their hands leaned against the pool table, beside which stood Donnelly and Kelp, the two principal actors in the scene.

This was at the Marine Camp—for we lived in tents—on Yerba Buena Island. To those who know it best, it is known as Goat Island. It lies practically in the center of San Francisco Bay, about half way between San Francisco and Oakland, a little nearer the Frisco side.

Donnelly dropped his hands to a fighting position and stepped back, slightly crouching. Kelp stood for a moment and grinned good-naturedly. There was no indignation, no anger in that grin. Nor was he afraid. There was no sign of fear about him. He turned to the pool table, indifferent, unruffled; and with equal indifference, called and made a three-cushion bank shot that involved a kiss.

It takes a clear brain, a clear eye and steady nerves to make a shot like that.

We finished our game of cribbage, my

opponent and I. We didn't trouble ourselves to inquire what had started the row. We were disgusted. Every one is disgusted with a man who won't fight back.

Presently the clear, staccato notes of tattoo resounded through the camp. I went to my tent and to bed, but not to sleep, for I was thinking about Kelp. I think much about the things I see. I am cursed with the habit of thinking. I even try to solve problems and Kelp was a problem, an anomaly that challenged me.

He was a new sort of man to me—a strange sort. He was not a coward and yet he would not fight back. Why? Certainly not on account of his size. (If size ever makes any difference to a man with grit in his gizzard.) He was a big man, powerfully muscled, and he had an enormous chest. It was deep and broad.

According to my analysis, he was not bored with life. Neither was he morose, cynical or pessimistic, or despondent. On the other hand, he was good natured and tolerant. That was it, tolerant of all men. He was as one who lies by the wayside of life and laughs at the antics of men.

He had, I was sure, never gone down into the ruck of life and tasted the bittersweet of action. It must be that he had never been thoroughly aroused.

I awoke. Until then I had not known that I had fallen asleep, while thinking about Kelp. My tent was shaking, not rocking, but jerking back and forth. The ground under me seemed to be bucking like a bronco. Also I was conscious of a faint, but hoarse rumbling. The feeling was something like that when one lies beside a railroad and a heavy train rumbles slowly past. The jar was greater, far greater, but the rumbling sound was farther away, much farther.

For an instant, I wondered if it were a dream, wondered if I were really awake. The next moment, I sprang from my bunk and pulled on a pair of trousers—nothing else—and stepped outside the tent. The flagpole in front of the guard house was waving back and forth like a tree in a storm. I looked beyond the flagpole and saw that two huge water tanks which contained the water supply for our camp were rocking to and fro like stationary buckets on the deck of a ship. The water was sloshing from the tanks in such volume that it literally washed a small gulley as it ran down the hillside.

In a few minutes, the entire company of marines were out of their tents asking questions of one another, trying to find out what was happening. The shaking continued, if I remember correctly, for something over two minutes. Then all was still and very quiet, for it was early morning. I looked at my watch. It was fifteen minutes past five.

By this time, we all knew what had happened. It was an earthquake—*the* earthquake—the big shake that tumbled down, crushed and pulverized the great metropolis by the Golden Gate.

No one was late for reveille that morning. There were no last second dashes to make the ranks in time to answer roll call. We were all dressed and waiting.

After reveille, we went to breakfast. So far there had been no indication of disaster. But while in the mess hall at breakfast we began to hear an occasional explosion. At first, they sounded like blasting. But as they increased in number, in rapidity, and in irregularity, we came to know that the sounds were not caused by blasting. We rushed out of the mess hall and turned our eyes in the direction of San Francisco from whence came the sounds.

Instantly following these terrific explosions, there would appear a vast cloud—a sort of gigantic mushroom—of dense, black smoke. And a second later, the smoke would be shot through with long, flashing tongues of flame. We knew then that great stores of chemicals and other combustible substances had been reached by fire.

As a sort of accompaniment to the more voluminous reports, there was a constant crackle of smaller explosions, presumably containers in drug stores, saloons and wholesale liquor houses. It was like rifle fire, supplementing the roar of artillery.

It could be seen now that hundreds of separate fires were raging in the business district. These, of course, had been started, in many cases by the ignition of oil tanks and reservoirs of gasoline. And even as we stood watching this awful spectacle, San Francisco, dazed and staggered, sent out her call for military assistance.

Our commander ordered us to prepare as for field service. We turned out fitted with our knapsacks, haversacks and mess gear, our belts filled with ammunition. We boarded the naval tug and crossed to the city.

THE scene that greeted us when we stepped from the tug to the pier was a marvel in destruction, disorganization and disorder.

A great city of nearly four hundred thousand population was in the grip of flame. The shock of the earthquake had tumbled down many buildings, had shattered timbers and made of them kindling wood. The same shock had burst the water mains of the city and thus left the fire department weaponless. Thousands of people were jammed in and around the Ferry Building.

They fought and clawed and tore one another in their mad efforts to get aboard the already overloaded ferry boats. It was pitiable—their mental condition. In their panic they had brought along such things as canary birds and pet parrots. Some of them were dragging rocking chairs and sewing machines, though scarcely any one had brought food or bedding.

The company of marines from Goat Island was divided into two platoons. It so happened that Kelp and I were in the first platoon and that Red Donnelly was assigned to the second platoon. From the Ferry Building, the second platoon was marched across East Street and turning south of Market, made its way up Howard Street, toward the Mission district. Though we didn't know it at the time, that was the last we were to see of the second platoon and of Red Donnelly for nearly a month.

Meantime the first platoon, the one to which Kelp and I were assigned, made its way up California Street to the district around Sansome and Montgomery Streets. Here we assumed the duties of policemen; and those duties at this particular time consisted mainly of keeping the people at a safe distance from the rapidly spreading fire. For though many had fled the city, there were still many others who would not even leave the burning areas.

Our instructions were to keep this crowd pressed back at least one block from the fire. To do this we formed a strong line, alloting each guard a short space with strict orders to allow no one to cross that space. Against this line, the people stood in a thick packed mob, rank behind rank, morbidly curious, the rearmost pressing the foremost ever forward.

What the temperature was in that raging inferno, I have never known. It was enough. Men wilted and women fainted. Children screamed and horses ran neighing through the streets. In front of us guards the fire was steadily consuming fortune after fortune in the shape of office buildings, business houses and dwellings. Cinders and ashes showered on us, drifted down our necks and blew into our eyes. Long tongues of flame licked out at us and parched the skin on our hot faces.

Once between watching my beat and rubbing cinders out of my eyes, I found time to look at Kelp whose beat was next to mine. His heavy shoulders, his deep chest and his broad face were the same, but that was all. His usual smile was gone and the man that looked out of his eyes was not the Kelp that I was accustomed to see.

It was a grim, purposeful man who proclaimed himself through those flashing eyes. I read there, even a hint of ferocity. My mind seemed to register it all in one brief moment and then I turned back to my own work.

Behind us stood the dense ranks of sweating, panting men, women and children. Between the wall of fire and the wall of humanity we paced up and down, up and down, steadily and consistently forcing the crowd back; and it was hard work, this herding a dazed, crazed multitude. There were those who rebelled and refused to be herded.

I remember one big fellow who broke from the pressing, shuffling ranks and attempted to pass the line of guards. He made a dash straight toward the fire, essaying to cross the short space which was patrolled by Kelp. He was a larger man even than the big, easy-going marine. It was no time for reasoning or coaxing. It required firmness, even force.

To my surprize, Kelp laid hold of the fellow savagely, unhesitatingly, and with a strength that I had hardly suspected him of possessing, whirled the offender around and shoved him staggering back among the crowd.

The man was infuriated. He wheeled again, lowered his head and rushed at the marine, his arms swinging like flails. Kelp saw his assailant coming. Without undue haste, but yet with a promptness and accuracy which portended clear thinking and determination, he dropped his rifle to the ground in plenty of time to set himself and meet the civilian's rush. He might have bayoneted the fellow. It would have been in the line of duty and he would have been justified. But he choose to meet his man on equal terms.

It was a brief fight, but it proved three things—that Kelp could punch, that he could take a punch, and that he was not afraid.

The civilian landed the first two blows. They were two long swings, a right and a left and they landed flush on Kelp's chin—one at either side. The marine made no attempt at defense—no effort to ward off the terrible blows. He took them as a matter of course and then drove his right fist straight to the other man's left chest. I was close by and I heard the thud of that blow in spite of the din and clatter that was all around us.

The civilian sprawled his length on the cracked, ash-strewn pavement. For the space of twice ten seconds and more he stayed down—unconscious. Then he came to and pulled himself weakly up on all fours. His face was blanched with pain. He twisted his neck, turning his eyes up until he saw Kelp looking down at him. He did not take time to rise. He squirmed around, still on all fours and, for all the world like a whipped dog, scurried in among the crowd.

I didn't blame the civilian for dogging it. I, too, had just seen Kelp's face and it was not a pleasant face to see. He appeared as vindictive as the hissing flames about him. The good-natured grin of the Red Donnelly episode was totally wiped out. Indeed Kelp had caught the very spirit of the flames. I remember wishing that Red Donnelly had been there then. I would have liked to see him try his trick of the night before.

After Kelp's fight, the people became more submissive. They fell back more readily before the constant urging and demanding of the guards. And all the time the fire was steadily spreading. Time and again whole rows of homes were blown up with dynamite in the vain hope of checking the fire.

Section after section of hose was pieced together and a thin stream of water, pumped from the bay, was brought to play against the on-marching flames. The little stream sizzled and sputtered and the hungry flames swept on with monotonous, unceasing regularity. And so that memorable day, that nightmare of all days passed.

Night came and the weary crowd began to thin. At last fatigue had overcome their curiosity. They went to the small, outlying parks and sought temporary rest. By this time the entire business district had been consumed and the fire had forced us back as far as Dupont Street in the very heart of Chinatown.

About eight o'clock that night we were patroling the Chinese district, doing our best to drive the frightened, chattering Chinamen out of their shops and homes. The fire was already gnawing at the backs of the houses on the east side of Dupont Street. As I was walking along this, the main street of Chinatown, I noticed a column of flame burst through the roof of a large wooden structure.

The roof partially caved in and the fire immediately flared up on the inside, thus lighting the entire structure. It was then that I observed a young Chinese girl—I knew she was Chinese by the trousered costume she wore—clawing frantically at an iron-barred window. The iron bars were set in securely and she could not budge them.

The window at which the girl stood was in the second story of the building and directly beneath was a shop where Chinese images and curios of various sizes were sold. Beside this shop six or eight steps led up to a broad door which opened on a stairway that afforded entrance to the upper story.

I was in the act of calling another man to help me batter down this door and make an attempt to rescue the Chinese girl when I saw Kelp rush across the street and attack the door with the butt of his rifle. I did not call the other man then, but ran across the street myself intending to help Kelp. He battered the door rapidly and furiously. After half a dozen blows, a large panel was caved in and Kelp dived through. I ran on intending to follow him.

Just as I reached the bottom step another portion of the roof above caved in. A great mass of burning shingles, joists and timbers completely blocked the doorway. It was now impossible for me to enter. I turned, rushed out into the street and looked up at the window just in time to see Kelp strip off his blouse, wrap it around the girl and gather her up in his arms. Then a broad sheet of flame from above swung down and completely curtained the window. An instant later, I heard another crash and from outward indications was sure that the floor of the second story had given way. After that I never expected to see Kelp or the Chinese girl alive, or at all for that matter.

However, I ran to the door of the shop—not the big door which had been blocked—with some vague notion of breaking it in, hoping that Kelp and the girl had fallen to the shop from the floor above. As I reached this door, a flame blazed up inside the shop and sure enough there was Kelp. He was dashing toward a window carrying a rather heavy piece of statuary which represented some Chinese idol. A few swift blows with the statue cleared away the whole of one window. Kelp threw his battering ram aside and rushed to the back of the shop. For a few seconds, he was out of sight. Then he reappeared carrying the Chinese girl. After that it was but a few seconds until he reached the street.

He was staggering, coughing and gasping. The girl lay limp in his arms. I rushed up and took the girl from him. He reeled over to the curb and sank down, still gasping and coughing. By this time, several other men had come to our assistance. Two of them took the girl and carried her to a sort of emergency hospital which had been set up in a tent a few blocks away. Having got rid of the responsibility of the girl, I turned my attention to Kelp.

He had been in great peril and his appearance and condition were ample proof of the fact. His clothes were burned through to the skin in more than a dozen different places and each hole in his wearing apparel marked a raw spot or a blister—a great red blister. They were, some of them, as large as the palm of a man's hand. The skin was off most one side of his face and cinders and small particles of charcoal were ground into the raw flesh. The backs of his hands were solid blisters, while the palms were raw and bleeding.

I helped him to his feet and noticed that he was limping. He had sprained one ankle in his fall. I got two other men to help me and between the three of us we carried Kelp to the same emergency station to which the Chinese girl had been taken. We turned him over to the hospital people and it was a week after that before I saw Kelp again.

* * *

MEANTIME the fire roared and flared and spread. It spread to Mason Street, swept through the apartment house district and on into the homes of the city's rich. The crowd was gone now and guards were no longer needed, so they set us to fighting fire. We dynamited more homes, we played on that red destruction with improvised hose but all to no avail. It drove us back and back, scurrying before the hungry invincible flames like helpless ants.

Then came a word of encouragement. It drifted, rumor-like, along the lines. There was nothing definite, but the intimation was that some new plan had been laid, that some sort of preparations were under way. Presently we were called in from our various stations and assembled in company formation. Then our captain wheeled us into column of fours and marched us out to Van Ness Avenue.

Van Ness Avenue is exceptionally wide, as broad as two average streets. It was, at that time, a fashionable driveway in a fashionable part of the city. Up and down this broad avenue, liveried coachmen were wont to drive prancing horses in a day when wealthy ladies took their recreation spins in carriages. The avenue was walled on either side by costly homes.

Assembled here we found and took our place among a large army of men. It was a shirt-sleeved heterogeneous army, albeit grim, resolute. There were cavalrymen and artillerymen from the Presidio, blue-trousered sailors from Mare Island and marines from Goat Island. The mayor was there and the street-sweeper. Bankers and ditch-diggers worked shoulder to shoulder and swapped advice. A clergyman had shed his black coat and a popular matinée idol's classic features were grimed and smeared with soot.

It was like the fleeing remnant of some beaten army, halted to make one last, desperate stand against a pursuing enemy.

We were marshaled on the west side of the avenue. Two blocks away on the east side the enemy, the winding, hissing flames marched victoriously on. The smoke-laden, night sky was copper hued with demoniac light. The one big hose which drew water from the bay had been laid along the center of the avenue. Men dragged the nozzle up and down, playing a steady stream of water over the houses on the west side of the avenue, wetting them, soaking them so that they would be less easily fired by the approaching flames. All along the eastern side of the avenue, artillerymen set cases of dynamite beneath the houses. To these cases, they attached electric wires which ran to portable batteries across the street.

Then they drew back and, at a prearranged signal, each battery sent its tiny spark shooting along the wire. Instantly there was a tremendous roar, second only to the earthquake itself. Bricks, timbers, splinters, dirt and all manner of débris rose in a vast cloud and showered back to earth. Where but a moment before a line of beautiful homes had stood, now lay a wrecked mass of ruins.

The fire came steadily on. It reached the wreckage and consumed it furiously. But the flames were low and in their winding and lapping failed to span the broad avenue. The big hose was used almost entirely for re-wetting those houses which stood on the west side of the avenue. Only once in a while was it brought to play on some extra-far-reaching flame. All manner of fire fighting devices that were to be had, chemical extinguishers and the like, had been gathered to the scene. Men stood by with these in hand, using them as sparely as possible and where they would do the most good.

Thus we sweated and toiled and fought that monstrous destruction there in the flare of a ruined city. At last the flames faltered, flickered down and became a vast bed of smoldering coals amid hot bricks and twisted iron. The fire had been checked. That grim, resolute army had won.

Three weeks later, when the menace of ghouls and thieves had passed, when unguarded property was, to some extent, safe and when the municipal police were able to handle the situation unaided, we marines from Goat Island left our quarters in the abandoned home of a millionaire on Pacific Avenue and started for our island home.

Going to the water-front, we marched down the rolling hills through a maze of desolation. Scarred fragments of the walls and pillars of once happy homes stood on every side, mute and grim testimonials of the havoc that had been wrought. Enormous twisted iron girders and small mountains of crumbled brick bore witness that the energy, industry and effort of half a century had been wiped out even as so much chaff.

As we made our way along these devastated streets, among these depressing scenes, Kelp marched with us. His burns and bruises and blisters were healed and he was, to all appearances, his old self again. There was about him decidedly none of the dash, decisiveness or purposefulness which had been his when he fought the big civilian or when he rescued the Chinese girl. I remember wondering if he had gone back into his old shell of indifference.

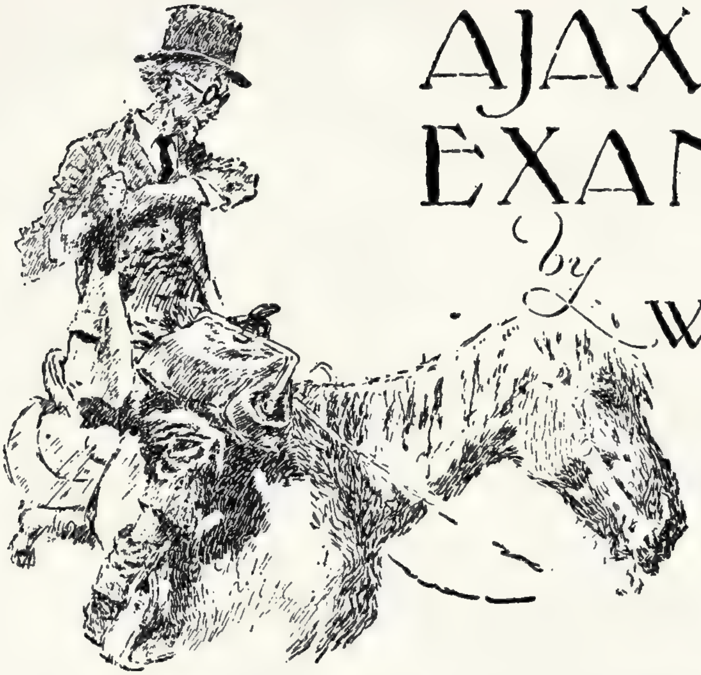
We arrived at the pier where the naval tug was awaiting us. The second platoon, the one to which Red Donnelly had been assigned and which we of the first platoon had not seen since the morning of the earthquake, was already there. They had taken their gear aboard the tug but most of the men had come back on the pier while waiting for us.

As soon as we reached the pier, the tug whistled sharply for all hands to get aboard. There was a rush for the gangway and a jam followed. Then suddenly a commotion was started right at the foot of the gangway. I turned and looked in that direction just in time to see Red Donnelly smash Kelp full in the face with a straight right.

"Now will you try to shove me aside an' git ahead o' me?" growled Red.

"It was an accident," said Kelp. "I was shoved myself, from behind."

There was no anger in his voice and he stepped indifferently aside and allowed Donnelly to go aboard first.



AJAX, FOR EXAMPLE

by W. C. Tuttle

Author of "The Spark of Skeeter Bill," "Tangled Trails," etc.

"HORSE SENSE," says "Magpie" Simpkins, "consists of knowing something that no school-teacher could pound into your head with a pile-driver. It's a sort of an initiative and referendum that books can't tell you about, and if you ain't got it, Ike, you might as well get you a loaf of bread, a jug of wine and hide out in the brush, where you won't hamper folks with your idiocy. There was Ajax, for example."

Magpie hooks his spurs into the top of the table and leans back in his chair. He knows there ain't no argument, but hopes I'll find one. I agrees with Magpie—for once. I'll tell you why I agree with him, and maybe you'll agree with me.

Me and you both know that there's educated fools. If I can have my choice I'll take the fool that never got educated in preference to one what absorbed everything he found in books, 'cause the educated one can't even crawl into a blanket without peering into a book to see the definition of the word "crawl," the proper uses of a blanket, and the procedure according to precedent.

Yessir, there was Ajax, for example.

Me and Magpie are cooking breakfast in our cabin on Plenty Stone Creek one Summer morning, when we hears footsteps approaching on horseback. Magpie steps to the door with a pan of bacon in his hand and peers outside. He takes one look and tries to scratch his head with the pan, the same of which leaves our hog-meat on the floor.

Then he looks back at me.

"Ike, come here! It's either a mistake or I'm mistaken."

I walks over and takes a look. Looks like one of Sam Holt's rat-tailed broncs, but the rider—whooee! I don't blame Magpie for dropping the bacon. I'd 'a' dropped a stick of dynamite if I'd had one.

I'll begin at the top and work on down. First we have a hat. She looks like a cross between a ordinary hard hat and a campaign lid, being as she's sort of flat on the top. Under said hat cometh hair, which seems to grow straight out.

Then we have a pair of funeral-rimmed specs forking the longest, skinniest nose I ever seen. I feels that it must blow about the same note as the stopped-down E string on a fiddle. The chin of the critter seems to be so long that the weight of it holds his mouth open.

We have with us now the neck. To speak like a poet I'd say that he had the neck of a swan. Maybe not so graceful, but longer. His shoulders shows a heap of neglect, and from there he just sort of slopes off to his feet, which is some slope, if you asks me.

Riding with his elbows has made his sleeves pull up almost to his shoulders, and hanging on with his knees has pulled up the legs of his pants until he's setting on most of 'em. He ain't anything for a drinking man to look at—if he likes the taste of liquor.

Me and Magpie stands there sort of weak-like and watches him search his pockets. He ain't said a word yet. The more pockets he searches the less he seems to find. He grunts and reaches for his hip pocket, the same of which seems to bend his legs backwards until his heels catch in that bronc's flanks.

Zowie!

That rat-tailed bronc resents such familiarity, with the result that said apparition lands setting down in our front yard while the insulted bronc wends its way home.

I plumb forgot to mention that this person carried a little valise on the saddle-horn. Yes, it came off with him.

He sets there on the chip-pile blinking like a old owl, and then he produces an envelope from his hip pocket. Then he adjusts his specs and peers up at us.

"I beg your pardon," says he.

"You have it," says Magpie.

"You won't catch that bronc this side of Piperock," says I. "He's still throwing sand."

"Ah! Oh, the—er—equine? Ah! Unavoidable, I assure you."

"Setting as you were," admits Magpie. "Good scheme to always watch a bronc's ears, old-timer."

"Pleasant pastime, I have no doubt," he agrees. "Oh, quite interesting. May I ask if either of you gentlemen is Mr. Simpson?"

"Little high and to the right," says Magpie. "I'm Simpkins."

"Ah, yes! Delighted, I assure you. My mistake."

He peers at the letter.

"Very good indeed. Simpkins it is. I beg your pardon."

"You're going to get splinters in you if you don't get up," states Magpie.

"Thank you very, very much," says he, handing the letter to Magpie.

"This is my—er—introductions, Mr. Simpson."

"S-i-m-p-k-i-n-s," spells Magpie.

"Ah, yes. Very simple."

"Yes," says I. "Very."

Magpie opens the letter, and I reads it over his shoulder.

My Dear Simpkins:

The bearer, Professor Ajax Ulysses Green, B.A., F.H.S., K.P., I.O.O.F., B.P.O.E., etc., etc., is desirous of testing out some pet theory, and I am taking the liberty of sending him to you, knowing that you and Ike will see that he gets what is coming to him. Do with him as you will—and I know you will.

Professor Pettingill joins me in sending you our best regards and hopes some day to see you again. Remember us to Dirty Shirt Jones, and all the rest of the *Pelicans* we met in the county of Yellow Rock.

Very sincerely yours,
F. H. Middleton.

P. S.—As Dirty Shirt says, "For ——'s sake, did you ever see the like?" He really is considered a brilliant man, and devoted to his work. Do as you see fit—but spare him, as Pettingill and myself will not rest well until he returns to Boston and tells of his experiences.

"Professor Middleton is one of my dear, dear friends," explains this alphabetical person sweet-like. "He was primarily responsible for my coming. You may thank him."

"My ——!" gasps Magpie. "I may, may I? Well, well! Come in, Ajax."

"I prefer to be known as Professor Green, if it is not too much trouble." says he stiff-like, but Magpie grins and says:

"I'm Magpie; this is Ike. You're Ajax. *Sabe?*"

"Rather—er—personal, don't you think?"

"How'd you like Ulysses?" I asks.

"No. If I have no choice in the matter I'd prefer Ajax."

"If I had my choice of weapons I'd take a pickax," grins Magpie. "Are you the *hombre* what discovered lightning?"

"Oh, no! The original Ajax defied the lightning, don't you know."

"He made a sucker play," says I. "Maybe he didn't *sabe* electricity."

Ajax refused to smoke a cigaret, so we gave him an old pipe that "Polecat" Perkins left in our shack, but he didn't seem to care for it.

"Now," says Magpie, "we'd admire to hear what you came here for."

AJAX crosses his legs, adjusts his glasses and clears his throat. It's some job to clear a throat like his. The best way, I reckon, would be to drop in a can of nitroglycerin like they do in oil-wells.

"I am here," says he, rubbing his hands

together, "to study the effects of astragalas splendens on the genus Ovius."

Me and Magpie looks at each other and then at Ajax.

"It is very interesting, don't you think?" asks Ajax.

Magpie walks over to the stove and begins to cut more bacon. After he gets it on the stove he turns to Ajax.

"What do you drink for breakfast?"

"Rarely anything, I thank you."

"You ought to take something," says I.

"Well, if I should, I prefer a beverage of *thea sinensis*."

"My ——!" grunts Magpie. "We're all out of that. Ike, I told you to get us some the last time you was in Piperock."

"It is not necessary at all," says Ajax.

"I know it ain't," agrees Magpie, "but I'd sure like to know what in —— it is."

Ajax drank water. Later on me and Magpie got his dictionary and looked up everything that human beings drink, and we found that that danged word-strangler wanted tea.

He don't *sabe* Blackfeet, Flathead or Chinook, and won't talk United States. We can't understand his wau-wau; so we can see that e-ventually some of us are going to be badly misunderstood.

If it hadn't been for Professor Middleton we'd have lured Ajax to a tall place in the trail and shoved him off. He wasn't even funny.

If you poked a gun under his nose he wouldn't have horse sense enough to hold up his hands. No, I'll be danged if he would! He'd likely smell into the muzzle, look it over careful-like and then classify it in a language that nobody in Yaller Rock County could interpret.

After breakfast he says—

"I will rest today if you don't mind."

"Rest in peace," says Magpie. "Take root if you must, but for the love of Moses try and bend your back and be sociable. You don't smoke, and if you did swear in your own little way nobody'd understand you. Do you drink?"

"*Spiritus frumenti?*"

"Go to ——! Next time I says good morning to you, Ajax, it will be in sign language. I'm through talking to you, that's a cinch."

"I will not consider it obligatory," says he lofty-like, and I just grabs Magpie's hand in time.

"Don't hold the hand of progress, Ike," says Magpie. "Can you figure out one good reason why I shouldn't kill him?"

"Except that we don't know exactly where to ship his remains. He's from Boston, Magpie, but it ain't like saying, 'He's from Piperock.' You've got to figure that Boston covers considerable space, and until we finds out his home address we better let him suffer. *Sabe?*"

"Where is your home, Ajax?" asks Magpie.

"Home? The habitual abode of one's family?"

I lets loose of Magpie's hand and reached for my own gun, but the coming of Dirty Shirt Jones saves me from killing a fool-hen out of season. Dirty slides off his bronc and nods to us. Then he sees Ajax. He peers at Ajax for a minute and then gets right back on his bronc.

"Get off and rest your feet, Dirty," says I, but Dirty only stares at Ajax and shakes his head.

Dirty shakes his head like a bee was buzzing around his ear. He shuts his eyes, shakes his head hard, and looks again.

"My ——!" says he awed-like. "I've seen a lot of things in my life. I've seen a tarantaler waltzing with a angle-worm, I have. I've seen a little green devil riding a Gila monster in a race against a horned toad which was ridden by me, but I've always been able to shake 'em loose for a minute. This'n I can't!"

"I am Professor Ajax Ulysses Green," says Ajax stiff-like. "It is extremely embarrassing when one's friends forget the—I—er—it places me in a position wherein I am forced to introduce myself to one whom my acquaintances greet as one of their own kind. Embarrassing, I assure you."

"Ex-cuse me," says Magpie. "Ajax, let me make you used to Dirty Shirt. Dirty, this here is Ajax."

"Name's familiar," says Dirty, scratching his head. "Oh, yes! 'Boiled Egg' Benson had a jassack by that name. I wondered who he named it after and why he used to kick it in the ribs all the time. Poor mule!"

"Maybe Dirty Shirt could help you, Ajax. He's seen about all there is in this country."

"Possibly," agrees Ajax. "I'd be grateful to a startling degree."

And then he turns to Dirty.

"I am out here, sir, to study the effects of astragalas splendens on the genus Ovius."

Dirty spits out his cigaret and clamps his jaws hard.

"Before you do anything, Dirty, appeal to your better nature," says I.

"What do you think, Dirty?" asks Magpie.

"Think?"

Dirty swings his bronc around and talks to us over his shoulder.

"I think you three has had all the fun you're going to out of me. I don't know what it means, but you can all go to —— as far as I'm concerned."

We watches him ride off down the road.

"Is he—er—entirely sane?" asks Ajax, watching Dirty disappear.

"Not now," says Magpie. "A human being can only stand so much. He got bit by a hipwiggler the other night."

"Ah! Quite interesting."

And he writes something in his little book.

Ajax wanted to rest that day, so we didn't bother him none. It gave us a chance to control our natural impulses to kill him, and also gave us a chance to do a little placer work.

I asks Magpie that night if we're supposed to give up our bunk to Ajax, but Magpie gives me one look which is plenty of answers. Anyway Ajax didn't desire it.

"Professor Middleton told me of the wonders of sleeping under the glorious firmament," says Ajax, "and I desire to experience it as he described."

"Fairly well ventilated," says Magpie. "Nice enough unless she rains or a hipwiggler comes along."

"Who is 'she,' and what is a hipwiggler, if I may ask?"

"She?"

Magpie smooths his mustache and scowls at the ground.

"Oh, yes; the hipwiggler. The hipwiggler is a animal. If one comes along and finds you sleeping on the ground it just plumb ruins you for future use. You're dead—that's about all."

"Your—er—friend you spoke about," says Ajax. "Was he sleeping on——"

"Uh-huh. A log saved his life. It's thisaway, Ajax: A hipwiggler is a queer animal. It always prospects a man from his head down to his toes. It gets to the end of you and then starts eating its way back. *Sabe?*

"Dirty Shirt went to sleep with his feet on a log. The hipwiggler comes along, walks to where it strikes the ground and then starts eating. It ain't got no *sabe*—not a bit. This one didn't *sabe* that Dirty had his feet on a log; so it went to the end of the log and starts eating. Logs ain't noways digestible, so it got disgusted and left Dirty alone."

Ajax took it all in and then gets inquisitive.

"Could I procure a specimen?"

"Nope. They only sleep between twelve and one o'clock, and nobody knows where they hole up. To catch one any other time you've got to take a sack in your hands, stand on the stump of a persimmon-tree and make a noise like a loofmad."

"Oh, I see. Quite complicated. More of this later, as I am interested."

"You deserve to be," says I. "If it wasn't for Middleton——"

"Ah, yes. I am deeply indebted to Middleton, the dear fellow. I shall mention him in my monograph."

"Do it," urges Magpie. "I'll do the same—in my prayers."

"I—I feel that I am going to make some wonderful discoveries out here."

"Well," says Magpie, "that remains to be seen, as the feller said when he dug into the Injun's grave."

AJAX gets a little skittish about sleeping outdoors, so he rolls up in a blanket on the floor. Me and Magpie are heavy sleepers, but he woke us up in the night. We sets up in bed and listens to him. He's making a lot of noise like he was trying to move the cabin.

Magpie is just getting up to see what the trouble is when Ajax comes in, grunting and wheezing. Comes a big bump on the floor, a deep sigh from Ajax, and then everything is still again; so we goes to sleep.

In the morning Magpie kicks me in the ribs, and I sets up in bed. There is Ajax laying on the floor with his bare legs bent up over a section of pine log about thirty inches in diameter. Magpie snorts right out, and Ajax sets up.

He looks all around the cabin and then reaches for his pants.

"I thank you for the information, my dear Mr. Simpson," says he. "I feel that the section of the genus Pinus was the means of saving my life. Several times after securing it I felt the deadly hipwiggler travel my entire length, only to fall off the log in surprize. It was a sensation I can not wish for again, but one I feel fortunate to have experienced. I thank you for your timely advice."

Magpie smoothed his mustache and stared at me and we both danged near choked. Ajax sure offered himself as a highway for pack-rats that night.

Then cometh Judge Steele. He's the educatedest *hombre* in the county. If there's anything he don't know he won't admit it. He owns half-interest in a claim up the creek, and is on his way up there with a pack-load of grub for his pardner.

We asks him in to breakfast 'cause you never can tell when you'll need the friendship of a judge.

"Good morning," says he to me and Magpie, and then he sees Ajax.

"Good gosh!"

"Howdy, judge," says Magpie. "Set in on the bacon."

"Ah!" says Ajax. "A judge. Are you an LL.B.?"

"Nope. Missourian and a stanch Republican."

"Ah! It is refreshing to meet an educated man in the wilds. Where did you matriculate, may I ask?"

"Where did I what?"

"Matriculate."

"I'm on my way to my mine, and I started from Piperock, if it's anybody's danged business."

And then he turns to Magpie.

"Friend of yours?"

"Liability, judge. He's trailing something that ain't here nor never was."

"Huh! What's he after?"

"You tell him, Ajax. Something about strangling the——"

"It is not a subject to cause levity," chides Ajax. "Is there any reason why I should not come here to study the effects of astragalas splendens on the genus Ovius?"

The judge stands up to drink his coffee and then goes out to his horses.

"What do you think, judge?" I asks.

He picks up the lead rope of his pack-horse and ponders the question.

"Ike, I hate to give out a judicial reply as I might be called upon to render a decision from the bench, but I'll say this much: Any jury in Yaller Rock County would convict him without leaving their seats."

He gets on his horse and pilgrims off up the trail.

"How quaint," grins Ajax. "Is he really a presiding judge or did he simply acquire the title as many Westerners are reputed to have?"

"I believe he is," says Magpie. "Danged if I don't believe he is."

"Is what?" asks Ajax.

"Right."

"Ah, no doubt," agrees Ajax foolish-like, and we let the matter rest.

Ajax puttered around for a while and then came to us.

"May I—er—have a piece of rope? Three yards will be sufficient."

"Plenty," agrees Magpie pleased-like. "You know how to tie the proper kind of a knot?"

"I— Perhaps not, but——"

"The pleasure is all mine," says Magpie.

Ajax looks the knot over interested-like.

"Beg pardon, but will you tell me why you wound the rope around so many times?"

"Thirteen times," says Magpie. "Any sheriff knows how. Now, do you want us to elevate the wagon-tongue or do you prefer a limb?"

Ajax's mouth hangs open for a full minute, and then he seems to catch the point.

"He, he, he! You—you thought perhaps I wanted to make a—er—a swing, I believe they call them. You were spoofing me, I fear. No, I thank you."

And he wandered away across the hills alone.

"Ike," says Magpie, "were you spoofing? A swing! My ——!"

We worked for a while but can't seem to get Ajax out of our minds.

The blamed fool might get lost or bit by a snake. Sidewinders don't respect education. After a while Magpie says:

"Ike, if it wasn't for Middleton I'd let the blamed fool sink or swim, survive or perish, but I'd hate to rob Middleton of a chance to hear Ajax tell his experiences. Reckon we better pesticate around a little and see where he went. I'd admire to find out what he's after."

"He said it was the effects of—" I began, but Magpie looked at me with his sweet smile and I shut up.

AJAX pointed almost due south, but we figured he'd bear a little to the west, so we cut across. We're pilgriming down into a draw at the head of a little fork of Medicine Creek when all to once we busts into a clearing, and Magpie stops.

I bumped into him, and then looked over his shoulder. There is "Doleful" Doolittle, who herds sheep when he's sober enough, and standing in front of him is Ajax.

Them *hombres* sure show signs of rough usage. Ajax's hat is smashed down over his nose, and he's looking out from between the crown and the brim. His coat is split up the back, and his long legs wabble a heap.

Doleful has lost one sleeve and his belt, the same of which causes him to hang on to his pants, so they won't come down and trip him. If Doleful had twice as much sense he'd be almost half-witted.

"Hear me?" yelps Doleful, shaking his one free hand at Ajax. "I'm tellin' you hereby that I'm aimin' to show you, feller!"

"Very ungrammatical, to say the least," pants Ajax. "Now I wish you to desist. Fisticuffs are a relic of——"

"I *sabe*," says Doleful, spitting on his hands. "Set yourself, feller, 'cause I'm coming wide open like a wolf!"

Boof!

Doleful takes a skip and a jump and lands on Ajax's bosom, and they both went into the alkali. It was some fight. They're both yelling for help in about ten seconds, and then they gets to their feet.

"You long-faced son-of-a-sea-cook, you bited me!" howls Doleful, rubbing his ear.

"I was—uh—but fighting the dud-devil with fuf-fire," wheezes Ajax. "You masticated my e-ear, friend."

"Friend?" yells Doleful. "Don't you call me friend! I hate —— out of you, by ginger! Hold fast, 'cause I'm coming to visit you again!"

Ajax sidestepped this time, and when Doleful stumbled over his legs Ajax fell on top of him. Man, they sure investigated each other. Doleful kicked, whooped and yelped and managed to squirm loose, minus one boot, which Ajax has annexed.

For a minute Ajax seems to show human intelligence by hammering Doleful over the head with the boot. Doleful wails loud and clear and hops away a few feet, where he takes off the other boot and comes back at Ajax.

"God didn't make men equal but boots did," says Magpie, and then them two are at it again.

It was some duel if you asks me, and before they're at it a minute me and Magpie are weeping on each other's bosom. They never seen us. In fact they hadn't been at it a minute until they couldn't see each other.

Pretty soon Doleful makes a wild swing, and the heel of that boot hit Ajax at the butt of his ear. That was plenty for Ajax, who sprawls on his face in the dirt, but Doleful didn't know it. He kept right on, hopping back and forth, whaling away with that boot at something that ain't there.

"Look at the danged fool!" gasps Magpie. "He can't see!"

Just then Doleful makes an extra hard swing, his foot slipped, and the toe of that boot hit him under the chin. He straightens up, shrugs his shoulders like a Frenchman and then falls flat on his back—knocked out, or rather kicked out.

"Honest to ——, that never happened," sobs Magpie. "Aw, it couldn't! He hit himself in the— Haw, haw, haw!"

I haw-haws with him, and we cries a duet.

Pretty soon Doleful gets to his feet, walks around in a circle and appears to be listening. Then Ajax coughs and sets up.

"I've had a gosh-darn plenty," states Doleful in a whisper. "Hear me?"

"I'm sorry," says Ajax.

"You danged hog!" wails Doleful. "I know when I've had a plenty. Where is my boots?"

Ajax feels of his ear like he half-expected to find the boot in there, but when he don't find it he shakes his head.

"I don't know, I'm sure."

"I'm going," states Doleful. "My gosh, it's dark today! I can just see enough to miss hittin' trees, and that's about all. Where are you?"

"I fear I'm not able to give you concise information on the subject," says Ajax painful-like, "because I am not aware of my exact position. If it will enlighten you to any extent I will say this much; I am on the ground."

"Then you stay there," advises Doleful. "If I step on you don't get sore, 'cause I don't mean nothing but good-by. *Sabe?*"

Doleful stumbles across Ajax's feet and goes weaving off through the mesquite, hanging on to his pants and picking up cactus in his feet. Then Ajax gets to his feet and peers around. His specs are still hanging around his neck, and he tries to put 'em on. He's been booted across the bridge of his nose, the same of which makes his specs feel like his nose was in a vise.

He yanks 'em off, and then begins to search his pockets. After a while he finds what he's looking for. Then he feels his way over to a rock, where he gets interested in looking at something—or trying to. We sneaked over and took a look. He's got a compass on the rock, and is talking to himself.

"Unless I am greatly mistaken I traveled due south. Due north would take me—uh—Now would it? Which way did I pursue the Ovius? Well, no matter, as I can not see the compass, therefore I am lost. Perhaps my shadow will inform me of the position of the sun, and by taking the time of day——"

He turns and peers at the ground.

"Futile," he mutters. "There is no shadow. No matter, as my watch is not running. Still I am lost. Not knowing the proper procedure in such a case, I will endeavor to remain stationary until such a time as I may regain the use of my optic nerves. I will think of a remedy."

"Raw beefsteak is hyiu stuff," suggests Magpie. "Ever try it?"

Ajax almost hopped out of his shoes. He peers at us, and then:

"Ah! Raw steak? I greatly prefer mine medium, *en casserole*."

"It's no use, Ike," sighs Magpie. "I had hopes that he'd been hit so hard that he'd talk our language, but I'm a poor guesser. You take one side, Ike, and I'll take the other."

AJAX led like a old pack-horse and didn't have much to say. We asked him why he was sore at Doleful, and he said the idea was absurd. We tied some raw meat over his eyes, and by supper-time he was able to feel the difference between a knife and a fork.

"Maybe some day you *hombres* will stay in the East where you belong," says Magpie disgusted-like. "You sure gallop in where natives fear to sneak."

"We scientists must suffer that the masses be informed," explains Ajax.

"You ain't going to get a lot of publicity by fighting a boot duel with a half-witted herder," says I.

"It was no violence of my making, I assure you, Mr. Harper. I was chasing the elusive Ovius when this vulgar person came between us. He used very insulting adjectives—very! My lips could never repeat the strange things he said. Naturally I resented. I descended to the level of a brute, and fought as my ancestors fought."

"I've heard of boot-leggers," says Magpie, "but you must 'a' sprung from a family of boot-fighters, Ajax. Did you hit him first?"

"I did not. Nor second or third. In fact he pummeled me for some time before I seemed to grasp his intentions, and then I retaliated."

"You ought to carry a boot," advises Magpie. "Feller like you ought to go heeled all the time. What do you aim to do next?"

"Next?"

Ajax rubs his sore eyes and looks up at Magpie.

"I shall certainly persevere until I have observed fully the effects of astragalas splendens upon the——"

But me and Magpie went out and left him talking to himself.

We helped Ajax bring in his foot-rest that night and watched him go to bed with his feet thirty inches higher than his head. He's so all-in that he never felt the pack-rats that night, and the next morning he's a sorry-looking hunk of scientific humanity.

His clothes are about seven-eighths to the sere and yaller leaf. His valise don't contain nothing but a book, some papers and a box of pills. Magpie looks him over from all angles.

"Somebody will kill you, Ajax, if you dress thataway," says Magpie. "In memory of Professor Middleton me and Ike will have to dress you civilized-like, I reckon."

We got him into an old pair of boots, one of my shirts and an old sombrero of Magpie's. He looks like ——, but he don't know it. Then he wants another length of rope.

"You going back to the same place?" I asks.

He considers it a moment, and shakes his head.

"I don't believe I will. That vulgar person might accost me again, and I have no time to waste in combat. I will try in another direction, if it makes no particular difference."

"Me and Ike are neutral," says Magpie.

"If you'd tell us just about what in —— you're hunting for, maybe we'd advise you."

"Oh, thank you. You see I wish to observe the effects of astragala——"

"You're welcome!" yelps Magpie. "Go ahead, and may you die in your boots."

"I fear that is impossible," says Ajax. "The boots belong to you."

"Happy birthday!" yelps Magpie. "They're yours, Ajax. Go to it."

"I will do my best, sir," says he, and we watches him going over the hills, dragging his rope behind him.

"Just plain crazy, Ike," declares Magpie. "Plain crazy."

"Not Ajax," says I. "Nossir! That feller is plumb fancy crazy. He's gilt-edged, perfumed and embroidered, Magpie. He knows a million dollars' worth of things that won't never do him any good—things that other fellers like him have found out; and now he's out here to find out something to pass on to them. It won't never do him nor anybody else any good—but they'll be glad."

WE KNOCKED off work late in the afternoon. I laid down on the bunk while Magpie fixes a kettle of beans. He's standing in the door of the cabin, pouring the water off them beans, when all to once there comes a hunk of lead, knocks the kettle out of Magpie's hand, and hives up in the foot of our bunk. Then comes the crack of a rifle.

I sees Magpie elevate his hands, and I slips loose my six-shooter. Then here comes "Mighty" Jones, covering Magpie with a rifle.

Mighty owns the only herd of goats in the county, and each and every one of them shaggy things is nitroglycerin on legs. I figures that Mighty has gone crazy from herding same, so when he turns sideways to me I slams a .45 slug into the loading-plate of his rifle.

That slug seems to cause consternation, being as it explodes some of Mighty's magazine, and when a magazine full of 45-70s begin to heave and surge, it's no place for a timid person.

Magpie turns a flip-flop into the cabin, and Mighty tries to dig himself into our chip-pile. I pilgrims out there and looks at Mighty.

"Whyfor the hands-up stuff, Mighty?" I asks. "You peeved?"

"You dang well know I am! You know why, too—blast you! I only seen one of you, but you two are pardners, and—I'll see you in jail. I'm going to get the sheriff, ——me!"

"Plain crazy, Ike," says Magpie sad-like. "Plain crazy."

"Very plain," I agrees.

"I'll see you both in jail—betcher life!" wails Mighty. "Sure will."

"Better see a eye doctor, Mighty," advises Magpie. "You're seeing things."

"You'll see something—dang you both!" And Mighty fogs off down the trail.

"Poor old coot," says Magpie. "Can't help feeling sorry for him, Ike."

"Uh-huh. He was a good old buggy but he's done broke down."

"No question about the buggy part, Ike."

We fixed up our pot of beans and wondered where Ajax is. We ate supper and wondered some more about Ajax.

Then cometh Lindhardt Cadwallader Sims, knowed as "Scenery." We always figured that Scenery was sheriff by default, being as two of Magpie's friends forgot to vote, and Scenery won by one vote. He's about knee-high to a he-human, and has darned near polished all the epitaph off his star in six months. He squeaks when he walks and squeaks when he talks, which makes him a pathetic person among his feller men.

The danged little imitation has a six-gun in his hand when he shows up in our doorway. He peers at us mean-like and clears his throat. I'm just about to pour some beans into my plate, but I takes one look at his gun and swings back with that kettle and let her fly. It was a good shot. She just turns over once and hit him right in the chin.

He staggers backward, drops his gun and begins to claw at them beans. Sudden-like he remembers his gun and goes pawing around for it. I swings the door about half-shut when I hears a biff and a grunt, and Scenery Sims comes into that door on his hands and knees. He hops to his feet fighting mad, and squeaks like a bull fiddle:

"You assassinators is all under arrest! Hear me? You can't monkey with no officer of the peace thataway and get away with it. Magpie, you daw-gonned, long-whiskered——"

Magpie stopped his yelps by picking him up and throwing him out of the door. Scenery was just sailing out as Ajax starts to come in, and they met. When an irresistible jackass meets an immovable educated fool there is something going on.

Them two misfits of the human race went into a clinch and hugged each other like long-lost brothers. They got up fighting blind, went into another clinch and rolled under Scenery's bronc.

For a few seconds there ain't nothing but hoofs, boots and dust to be seen. Then it gets too warm for a buzzard-headed bronc, and said animal leaves its master to fate and an educated fool.

Ajax was a lot stronger than he looked. He squirmed loose, grabs the sheriff by the neck and the seat of the pants and cast him far away.

Poor Scenery! He rolls over a few times and staggers to his feet. He whales away with both fists at nothing, crosses his feet and falls down again.

Then he gets up and starts off down the road. He walks a few steps and then runs a few. Then he does it all over again, like he was expecting a kick in the rear every time he steps.

Ajax has set down on the ground and is trying to dig the alkali out of his mouth and eyes. He sure is a sight. Me and Magpie walks over to him, and Magpie says—

"Say, professor, we'd admire to know if it was you who knocked Scenery into our cabin."

"Scenery?"

He peers up at us and then blinks shut again.

"The general aspect, as regards variety or beauty, or the reverse, of a landscape?"

"My ——!" says I. "He asked you in a lady-like manner: Who knocked Scenery into our cabin? The man you fought. *Sabe?*"

"The—the man I fought?" stutters Ajax. "Did I—I fight a man?"

"Say," says Magpie, "did you get hit so hard that you don't *sabe* things? What did you think you was mopping the earth with?"

"I—er—really—" Ajax mops some more dirt out of his features and peers around—"I—er—suppose I must take your unsupported word for it, but I—I thought at the time that I was being attacked by a specimen of the genus Ovius."

Magpie kicks the empty bean-kettle into the cabin, and me and him follers it inside. Pretty soon Ajax looks in. He peers all around and then begins to search outside.

Me and Magpie went out there and looked around, too. Then Ajax starts circling the cabin, and me and Magpie follered him like a pair of bird-dog pups follering an old dog, but we don't find anything. Pretty soon Ajax sighs deep-like.

"Well, it isn't here, it seems."

"Maybe you lost it some other place," suggests Magpie.

"No. I had it when I arrived."

"——!" grunts Magpie. "What was it, Ajax?"

"The—er—specimen of the genus Ovius."

I grabs Magpie just in time. Ajax never did know how close he skidded to the graveyard that time. Magpie was so mad that he wouldn't come into the cabin while I throws a feed into Ajax.

"There should be a drastic legislation against the careless use of firearms," states Ajax. "Would you believe it—" he pokes a fork at me like he was trying to see if I was done—"some careless person, evidently shooting at random, nearly struck me? I was a little south of here, returning with my specimen, when I detected a singing noise past my ear. Immediately following came the report of a firearm.

"In endeavoring to ascertain the location of the miscreant I became entangled with my specimen, and luckily we fell into a depression behind an outcropping of granite formation. Luckily the depression was filled with a thick growth of mimosaceous shrub, which screened us from view.

"I feel sure that the target was located upon or near that granite outcropping, because in a few minutes I could hear the marksman carrying on a conversation like this, omitting the vulgarity, of course:

" 'Pshaw! Missed entirely!'

"And then he seemed heartily ashamed of himself, as he said:

" 'Too bad! I should have had higher aspirations.'

"The last may not be correct, but at any rate he mentioned something about holding higher, which amounts to the same."

"Yes," says I, "he was careless, Ajax. I feel sorry for him."

"Perhaps I should have extended my sympathy," says Ajax. "But—er—really I was in no position to think of the niceties of social custom."

"What was you doing all this time?" asks Magpie from the doorway.

"I—er—I was trying to preserve my hold upon the Ovius."

I SEEN Magpie walk out about fifty feet, throw his hat on the ground and hop up and down on it. This Ovius is getting under his hide.

"I will persevere," says Ajax determined-like. "I must persevere."

"All right, Percy," says I. "Don't let us stop you."

Me and Magpie talked things over, but we can't figure it out.

"That's the —— of it, Ike," says Magpie. "If Ajax was a human being he could tell us what he's after, but education has plumb ruined him for conversation. I reckon we've got to give him plenty of rope, and he'll hang up some place."

"He's used up enough rope to hang all the rustlers in Montana," says I. "He had one specimen, Magpie, but somebody shot at him——"

"Rotten shooting!" snorts Magpie. "There is such things as mob law, and if he don't give us a chance to see what he's after I'm going to turn myself into a mob and make him talk something we can *sabe*.

"What in —— is a Ovius? As far as I can remember there ain't never been one seen here. None of the old-timers has ever spoke of any such a thing, Ike. There ain't nothing in the Injun language that sounds like it."

"Well," says I, "what is astragalas splendens?"

"There you are!"

Magpie waves his arms and walks in a circle.

"There you are, Ike. Both of us holds a blank hand, so we just splits the pot. I reckon I'll likely kill Ajax tomorrow."

"And never find out what he's after?"

"There are things better left unknown, Ike. Let's go to bed before we mention something that we can't explain."

Ajax is writing in his little book by the light of a candle, and when we come in he stops.

"Pardon me," says he to Magpie. "Has anything ever been written regarding the hipwiggler?"

"Nun-not that I knows about. It ain't what you'd call popular."

He thinks it over for a while, and then he sort of says to himself:

"It could be named after me. What an honor!"

"Yes'm," admits Magpie. "You can be a father to it if you want to."

"If I could only secure a specimen!" he wails. "I must! I will!"

He hops off his seat and walks up and down the cabin.

"You spoke of something about securing one by making a noise like a—a——"

"Loofmad?" asks Magpie.

"Exactly. A loofmad. Is it a—er—difficult sound to make?"

"Nope. Easy for lots of folks."

"Would you mind giving me a demonstration?"

"Not me. I did once, and I almost got killed."

"Ah! Is it dangerous?"

"It is and it ain't. You'd be safe, Ajax."

"Will you teach me?"

Ajax stops in front of Magpie and holds out his hands like Magpie had something to give him.

"Teach you? Man, you're born to it. No, I can't tell you how to do it, but the proper note is in your voice every little while, only you don't know it."

"Is it a gift?" asks Ajax.

"Merry Christmas!" explodes Magpie. "If it is I hope nobody knows when my birthday is, and that Sandy Claws goes blind."

"Interesting but vague," says Ajax, and goes back to his book.

Yes, Ajax slept with his feet in the air again.

Me and Magpie talks over the events of the day, but we can't figure it out. We can't figure why Mighty wishes to hold us up, and why he sends Scenery up there with blood in his eye. We asks Ajax the next morning if he's done anything wrong, but he shakes his head.

"I never have done anything wrong," says he.

"This is a great little country to establish a precedent," says Magpie. "A herder of goats comes here yesterday and shoots a bean-pot out of my hands. Later on the sheriff comes up—but you know that. Do you know why they comes here?"

"I haven't an idea."

"I know you ain't, but I thought maybe you had a hunch."

Ajax got himself a rope this time. He hunted around until he found an old sack, and then he sets down to look in his little book.

"Today," says he, "I am going to make a supreme effort to secure valuable data, and I wish to ask a few questions. Is the hipwiggler a vegetarian or of the carnivora, and what is its habitat?"

"The hipwiggler," says Magpie, "eats anything and is fond of children. It is of the hootchie-kootchie family. Hootchie, meaning hip, and kootchie, meaning to wiggle. The great difference between it and anything else is in its shape, size, actions, color and odor."

"Hootchie-kootchie?" asks Ajax. "Is that—er—an Indian word?"

"Uh-huh. The Camelpunchers."

"Has the hipwiggler a distinctive odor?"

"You dang well know it has. You look for something that you never seen nor smelled before. *Sabe?* Catch it and bring it here, and if it ain't a hipwiggler we'll tell you."

"I see. We will have an elimination proceedings."

"Somebody will be, that's a cinch," grins Magpie.

Ajax tightens the rope around his waist, picks up his sack and faces the east.

"I gird up my loins and fare forth. Today I will complete my quest. I bid you good morning, gentlemen."

We watches the blamed fool pilgrim across the hills.

"You've got to admire him for sticking," says I, but Magpie snorts:

"Yeah? Might as well give three cheers for a cactus, Ike."

"DOUGHGOD" SMITH comes past about dinner-time and stops to smoke a cigaret.

"Seen a posse today," grins Doughgod. "Some bunch. Scenery Sims, Mighty Jones and Doleful Doolittle. Put them three on a two-by-four island and they couldn't find each other."

"Where did you see 'em, Doughgod?" asks Magpie.

"They left town about an hour before I started. Pointed towards Mighty's place."

Doughgod rode on, and me and Magpie ponders things. That's some posse to go after anybody. Pretty soon Magpie sniffs the air. I sniff a little too, and then we hear Scenery Sims' squeaky voice.

"Halt! You darn fool—halt!"

We steps around the corner of the cabin and sees a queer sight. In the middle of the trail stands Ajax. Standing between his long legs is a goat—a sick-looking goat. Ajax has got the sack over his shoulder, and when he sees us he swings it to the ground.

Above him on the hill is Scenery with a rifle in his hands, and about sixty feet behind Ajax is Mighty, hanging on to his nose. Below Ajax, standing on the side of the hill with a rock in each hand, is Doleful.

"Stand still, dog-gone you!" squeaks Scenery. "You're under arrest!"

"It is all very peculiar," says Ajax sick-like. "I don't know what it all means, and I——"

Ajax picks up his sack and starts for us.

"Stop him, Magpie!" yelps Scenery. "Shoot the darn fool!"

Ajax stops and looks foolish.

"Will somebody explain things?" asks Magpie, holding his nose.

"He's a thief," says Scenery. "Caught with the goods, too. He stole thet goat from Mighty Jones."

"Well," says I, "why don't you arrest him, Scenery? He ain't heeled."

"Not me! I don't want him."

"I demand his arrest!" yelps Mighty.

"Shut up, Mighty!" squeaks Scenery. "He's been arrested five minutes; ain't you, feller?"

"You mentioned such a proceeding," admits Ajax.

"The law is satisfied."

"What you got in the sack, Ajax?" I yells.

"I am not sure, but I think it is a hipwiggler."

"He tried to steal my sheep," stated Doleful. "He assaulted me and——"

"Hipwiggler ——!" snorts Mighty. "He's got a polecat in that sack. Him and that goat are inoculated against any smell from now on and forever. Amen."

Ajax stands there and looks foolish. He can't smell nothing. There is such a thing as getting too much. The goat swallers hard and leans against Ajax. I feel sorry for the goat.

"Well," says Magpie. "you might as well take your goat, Mighty."

"Not me!" yells Mighty. "I'm off that goat forever."

"Well, it's sort of a deadlock," says I. "Ajax is arrested in name only and the owner of the stolen property refuses to take it back."

Just then Judge Steele rides in from the mine. We explains things to him, and he looks wise.

"Clean case against him, judge," states Scenery. "He's got the goods on him."

"Think I can't smell?" snorts the judge. "This is an open-air case."

He pounds on his saddle-horn.

"Hear ye, hear ye, hear ye! This honorable court is doing business. The prisoner will stay where he is. Are you guilty or not guilty?"

"I have no idea," says Ajax weary-like.

"Prisoner, does that goat belong to Mighty Jones?"

"I have no idea."

"Call it and see if it comes to you, Mighty," suggests Magpie.

"Like ——!"

"Let the goat loose and see who it goes to," suggests the judge.

"Whoa!" yelps Mighty. "Don't do that! I don't know how he ever got the rope on it, but I do know it's the champion butter of the world. You stick with it, feller, and get time off for good behavior."

"This is the same one I had yesterday," states Ajax. "It—er—struck the sheriff, I believe."

"Haw! haw! haw!" whoops Magpie. "It upset our sheriff something awful."

We considers things for a while, and then the judge says:

"According to my own reckoning there ain't nothing to be done, but I has to pass an opinion. Being as the prisoner, smelling as he does, is of no value to the prosecution, and the plaintiff refuses to take back his alleged property, I adjudicates thusly:

"The prisoner will be banished on his own recognizance. Feller, you better go away off some place. *Sabe?* Take your clothes and burn 'em and jump in the river or vicy versy. Given under my hand and seal this fifth day of August in the year of our Lord, and the County of Yaller Rock.

"Now I'd admire why a freak like that does things like he's done?"

"I was desirous of observing the effects of astragalas splendens on the genus Ovius."

"The —— you was!" snorts the judge. "Find out?"

"No. I was almost prepared for the experiment when this unforeseen contingency arose."

"My ——!" grunts Magpie. "He was sure going to do something awful."

"It is nothing to——"

Ajax dropped his rope and stooped to pick it up; and didn't finish his sentence, 'cause that goat hit him dead center and Ajax and his sack turned a cartwheel. The polecat came out of the sack and tangled with the goat, and then both of them started back down the trail towards Mighty.

Mighty must 'a' got his property back, 'cause as far as we can see 'em Mighty is still in the lead, but it's almost a cinch the goat will win out in the end.

Ajax watches 'em for a minute and then starts for the cabin.

"Wait!" snaps Magpie. "I'll get your belongings for you."

"I am going away," says Ajax sad-like; "going where intellect is appreciated. I came here on a scientific mission, and I find that research work is not appreciated."

"We may not be strong for you, Ajax, but it's a cinch you're too strong for us," says Magpie, tossing the valise to Ajax.

"Good-by, Ajax," says I. "Tell Middleton hello for us."

"I shall tell him something for myself," says he, picking up his valise. "Most surely I shall speak to Middleton about you both."

We watches him pilgrim down the trail, exuding odors of which there is no imitation.

"Magpie," says the judge, "have you any idea what he wanted?"

"Not in my language, judge. I'm going to write to Professor Middleton and ask him what it is. I reckon Ajax came to the wrong place."

"Let me know, Magpie," squeaks Scenery. "I'd admire to hear what it was."

We didn't hear no more about Ajax, and about three weeks later we're down at Piperock and got a letter from Middleton. We got Scenery, and the three of us went up to Judge Steele's office.

Magpie opens the letter and reads it aloud to us:

DEAR MAGPIE AND IKE:

Professor Green returned. Tell me about the thing he calls a hipwiggler. He dropped some information to Pettingill regarding it, but refuses even to nod to me In fact he is very reticent over the whole matter.

He started to tell Pettingill about the "loofmad." Pettingill wrote it out and happened to spell it backward Now Green won't speak to Pettingill Please tell us why a vigilance committee in Silver Bend made him burn his clothes, which by the way contained his money. We are very anxious to hear all about it.

You ask the meaning of Green's statement—to study the effects of astragalas splendens on the genus Ovius.

Magpie's lips move slow-like over it, and then he hands the letter to us. The three of us bends over it and reads where he left off:

> He meant that he wished to study the effects of loco-weed on sheep.

The four of us leans back against the wall and look at each other.

"Magpie," says the judge, clearing his throat and brushing off his vest, "Magpie, what do you think of too much education?"

"On a par with astragalas splendens, judge."

"To which," says the judge, "I will say, '*E pluribus unum.*'"

All of which might be true, but Ajax was our first example.

FIRE BRAT OCCASIONS

by F. St. Mars

Author of "Another Pawn of Fate," "The Price of Leadership," etc.

THEY had gone to bed, the people of the house, leaving silence behind, broken only by the steady gnawing of a mouse in the far corner, and now and then the buzz of a fly, apparently dreaming. The room was warm even without the fire which threw a warm red glow over all things, and a kettle on a trivet suddenly began to whisper to itself very softly indeed, and then was still.

Then all at once was a flash of silver upon the tiles of the hearth. It was repeated, doubly so, two flashes, and vanished. Something was alive there, and it moved, moved like a silver fish, but it was not a silver fish, nor a "silver fish," for there is an insect of that name, but a fire brat, which is the "silver fish's" cousin, and very odd.

Peering closely, one might have beheld a little steely backed creature, shrimp-like rather than insect-like, about half an inch long, torpedo-shaped, but thickest at the head end, with two long, whippy feelers at the front end, and three long whippy feelers at the tail end, and six little longish shrimpy legs, thinner than cotton, and palest shrimpy color, and little false legs which never did anything but act as props to hold up the tail end, and two little eyes like pinpoints of black, and two claw-like jaws or pincer arrangements; and it lay as flat as a tortoise, so flat that, as it rested in the crack between two tiles, it exactly fitted, and could not have been touched from outside, not even by a mouse.

Indeed, a mouse, soundless as a shadow, appeared suddenly in the ruby glow of the firelight at that moment, and—having apparently seen the silver flash—sniffed at the fire brat in the infinitesimal space, then scratched at it, but could not touch it, nor get it out, and finally turned away and vanished as soundlessly and "spookishly" as it had come, lifting its feet rather high, for the hot tiles burned them.

They were hot enough to burn any living creature and the heat in the crack must have been terrific, but it did not trouble the fire brat. After all, what is the good of owning a name like that, if you can not live up to it?

Suddenly another silver flash appeared behind the first, seen and gone again in a jiff, but there none the less. Another fire brat was in the crack between the tiles, approaching the first, creeping upon it from behind. Yes, there could be no mistaking the surreptitiousness of the movement. It is strange indeed that even among these lowly creatures—the lowest of all insects—evil intent almost invariably carries a stamp with it which few can misinterpret.

The second fire brat crept on, inch by careful inch, the first one, by reason of his position, the fact that he could not turn, and the slope of his rounded shoulders, being apparently quite unable to see the danger.

Something seemed about to happen; and it did.

Almost invisible, the first fire brat's three thread-like feelers from his tail end had been lying out along the crack well behind him, and the approaching one touched—only touched—one of these. The result was curious.

Instantly, as if touched by electricity, the first fire brat lashed his three tails like unto a mad thing, and as he lashed he ran on an inch or two. The second fire brat instantly "froze," if one may use the term in connection with a creature of such a warm name. And this, it seemed, was the meaning of those three tail feelers and the long head ones—to prevent surprize from directly ahead or astern in the dark, and in confined spaces where there might be no room to move quickly.

After a minute, the maneuver was repeated; the slow, cautious crawl forward, the warning telegraphed by the long tail feelers, the wild lashing, and the little run ahead.

Three times this happened, and then, suddenly, on the fourth time, the first fire brat, being now in a wider spot—any width of a quarter of an inch is a thoroughfare to these dwellers in cracks—whipped round, spun about right-about-face, with such incredible instantaneousness that the enemy, running in for a strangle-hold, found that his victim's back was not there, but his fighting front was—almost touching his own nose.

For about the length of two long breaths they remained there as motionless and emotionless as stone fish. Then they backed away, right-about turned, and started running along the crack between the tiles.

Now the tiles were squares, and the cracks, therefore, also. Wherefore the two, naturally, found themselves soon face to face again, and the *impasse*, and the only possible way of getting out of it, was repeated.

Then again they ran, and again they met, and this time the first fire brat—who, since we must give him a name, we'll call Thermoby—ran out upon the tiles, where, so utterly instantly that it would seem to have been impossible for any living creature—especially one completely unwarned as he was unwarned—to escape it, a house cricket, goggle-eyed, pantomime-masked, lobster-jawed, squat and gnome-like, darted upon him.

But if the fire brat possessed no wings to fly with, and no long grasshopper-like legs to jump with, and if he owned no heavy armament, no sting, no great fangs to engage a great foe with, nor tested armor to face a siege in; if, in fact, he was only a crawler, lightly, almost tinily armed, and so fragile that it was almost impossible to touch without damaging him, he nevertheless had something up his dainty salmon-pink sleeve that was not a bad substitute.

Fact may say that Thermoby merely dodged that cricket of the hearth as much as fact likes; but to the eye, he became a good imitation of an electric sparking display. Every time he turned sidewise his silver tummy flashed like a speck of light, and since he seemed to turn a dozen times a second, the result was surprizing. You did not so much see him as see his flashes. Nor could any person tell at any given moment where he was. No human eye could follow him. He simply created a maze of himself, at a speed so great that he seemed to vanish.

As for the cricket, it—well, it looked foolish. Its own rush had been something remarkable in the matter of instantaneous darts, but this here-there-and-everywhere-at-once act, in the space of a few inches, of the fire brat was beyond even the cricket.

In two seconds Thermoby had sparked—there is no other word for it—himself into a crack between the tiles, and even the cricket seemed to know that no foe upon this earth could follow this child of heated cracks into his own domain, and therefore it went away.

No foe upon earth—save one. And that one he came upon now. Darting headlong into the crack between the tiles, and instantly crouching motionless, flattened as only he, with his body specially designed for the purpose, could flatten in a space so narrow that no foe powerful enough to face him could get at him there, he suddenly discovered the fact that he was not alone. Indeed, to be quite precise, Fate had chosen to land him very nearly on top of that other fire brat whose suspicious maneuverings had driven him into this adventure to begin with. And like a flash, Thermoby recovered his surprize—if ever these creatures do feel surprize—and fought for it.

As a fight, after so much promise, the struggle which followed was a distinct fraud—from the human point of view, at least. Possibly from a fire brat standpoint it was a battle. Anyway, they simply closed, grappled, and—well, they simply closed and grappled.

After a time some one, looking very closely with a pocket-lens, could have seen that Thermoby had got one of the two delicate, slender little pincer things which he carried in front of him—in a tiny way resembling the same kind of thing possessed by prawns—in under the armor of his foe, well forward. That was all. What precise magic lay in that particular strangle-hold I can not tell you, but—it did the trick.

After ten minutes Thermoby unloosed himself, so to speak, and went away, but the other did not. That other moved, indeed, but only very feebly, and when, after some five more minutes, Thermoby, who, for some strange occult reason of his own, had been for an energetic walk round the adjoining cracks and crevices and country generally—a matter of two hand spans—came back, he found the foe evidenly *in extremis* and within a couple of inches of where he had left him.

Then Thermoby renewed that magic hold for some ten more minutes, and then—well, then, he fed. However, we may draw a curtain here—not that Thermoby did not feed like a gentleman. He did, most daintily, more daintily, perhaps, than any creature on earth, and one would indeed have had the greatest difficulty in seeing that he was feeding at all, and, except for the loss of one front feeler and one leg—they seemed to have come off by merely being touched—his victim looked none the worse for the episode.

But it was the realization that the fire brat was feeding upon his own kind that makes the act horrible, for even in the wild, cannibalism is almost, as Mr. Kipling puts it, "a thing that no fellow can do."

A LONG time Thermoby spent at his meal, and another fire brat came and discovered him at it. The other fire brat was smaller than he, and passed on, but whether smaller or larger, it might easily have been Thermoby who had to pass on. It is so in fire brat society, for though they are with each other, they are never of each other, and an armed neutrality appears to be the nearest imitation they get of peace all their lives.

Presently Thermoby went away—to digest and ponder, apparently. He went toward the fire, which had grown very red in the face, as fires will sometimes when you leave them to go out, and the heat in the place where he sat in a crack was something awful! Even the kettle was beginning to sing again beside him.

Yet he never seemed to mind it, and apparently he slept. At least, he did not move, and though his pin-point eyes never shut—or could shut—he certainly had the appearance of sleeping, or at any rate of basking.

Thus then he remained stuck fast, as it were, struck rigid like a crocodile posed, for half-an-hour, till, all at once, five fire brats, coming along the same crack in Indian file touched one of his tail tips, and set him to violent lashing and a run forward. Hereupon a red-hot cinder fell not upon him only because he shifted quicker than it fell, and he found his way blocked by a, to him, fiery cliff of awful import.

Spinning then instantly upon himself, he faced the others behind him, and discovered an *impasse* again. He could not go forward. They dared not go back, for a larger fire brat than all was behind, bringing up the rear, and they were rather small, one a little dinky fellow you could scarce see till he flashed.

There was nothing for it, then, but for them to break line, which they did, racing for the nearest cracks and cover, as if the light, and not the heat, hurt them—all save one, and that the last one, the bully, who had simply come forward along the narrow spaces, and in so doing, probably almost unconsciously, had swept up a crowd before him. Now he found one before him, standing like a steel and ruby and silver statue, who—would not be swept up.

Instantly they fought.

The fight lasted one-fifth of a second. You would want a micro-photographic plate, not an eye, to record what happened.

After which fight, so-called, the visitor turned and went back by the way he had come. He was not in any hurry, but he did not stop. The greater part of one of his feelers—the off-side one—was missing, but it had been "all present and correct" when he had arrived. Thermoby followed in more leisurely fashion later.

This following of one another up and down cracks and crannies seemed to be part of the scheme of things with the fire brat folk, but Thermoby did not follow far. He turned back soon along another crack, which led toward the fire, heat, fierce heat at least some period of the twenty-four hours, being necessary to his being.

He found that many of the fire brats of that neighborhood, which was the hearth—perhaps some one can explain how they first colonized the place at all, by the way—were gathered around the glare, but not visibly so. Most were hidden in crannies, and as he peered into each hiding place, or gingerly stepped past a silent, close-pressed, silvery steel form, he met everywhere waving feelers to warn him off. It was like being under the sea among prawns and shrimps and such ilk.

Anon he came to a group of middle-sized fire brats at business—feeding apparently—round some bread-crumbs. Anon, again, he came upon a big fire brat, all alone, feeding upon—not crumbs, but all that was left of the husk of a lesser fire brat. And it was noticeable here, as with Thermoby's lapse of character, that the corpse of the victim was not in any way carved, but seemed almost invisibly to shrink from inside, the outer shell, the creature itself, remaining always, however much fed upon.

Presently Thermoby, wandering devious in an aimless sort of way, and almost always out of sight, appeared upon the hearthrug, where, as he turned, he gleamed like a new sixpence. Almost instantly an answering gleam flashed in front of him, and then, so quickly that it seemed like the shooting of light off the sides of very small, darting fish, came gleam upon gleam upon gleam. No words of mine can express the rapidity of those silver flashes—here, there, over there—everywhere at once.

Thermoby "froze" instantly into motionlessness. Then, suddenly and prawn-like, began to retire backward. He knew the meaning of those lightning-flash gleams—who should, if not he?—but he was too late to avoid the trouble that they spelled.

It is unusual for fire brats to charge headlong into one another. As a rule, if they see no other way, they turn back and go different ways, or manage—warily, always warily—to slide over.

Therefore, when an unknown fire brat, racing out of the shadows across the hearthrug, barged full tilt into Thermoby, the latter was somewhat surprized. The reason may have been that the other had no feelers on the front end of him, and so nothing to warn him of impending collision. They come off easily, these feelers, but it looked suspiciously as if some foe must have got the ones in question.

However, Thermoby had no time to note these, or any other matters. He had only time to shoot straight up on end, which the other did also, and execute a rather fine fling aside to avoid falling on his back, a thing most insects loathe doing.

And it was just as well, this leap aside, for, even as he let the other by, he was conscious of a dark and reddish thing, with waving feelers—antennæ is more correct—a large flat face, and a smell which no one can mistake, shooting past him at the gallop. He felt, rather than saw, toothed jaws like scythes, snapping at him and everything else within reach, and he promptly turned himself into an electric spark let loose.

He had no desire to end his life via cockroach, which was what this vision was, and in about half a second he reached a crack between the floor boards and the hearth, and—was not. In other words, he was instantly as motionless as the dead.

He was not alone, however. Several fire brats were gathered here, as a suitable "taking off" place for expeditions of adventure upon the hearthrug, where, one may presume, they dealt in bread-crumbs and other commodities of a like nature.

In doing this, they would come into direct competition with the cockroaches, the crickets of the hearth, the mice, a beetle or two, and some others, but most of them seemed willing to back their amazing agility against all comers. Some there were, though—and perhaps all, if they saw a safe chance—who were not out to deal in anything so innocent as bread-crumbs. And Thermoby was one of these barbarians.

After a while, he sauntered up, quite idly and with a preoccupied air, to a big fire brat lying, or standing, or whatever they call it, just ahead of him. He was rewarded with violent lashings of the big one's three whip tails and every other sign of transports of rage, and he retired precipitately. Toward a second, and smaller, fellow fire brat, squatting like a prawn on the sea-bed, facing him, he next went. Here he was met with wild waving of the long whippy antennæ, and backed away again as one pained that his friendly advances should be so misunderstood.

Sauntering on farther, picking his teeth—it really looked like it with his infinitely delicate and tiny, thin, prawn-like pincers—resigned, apparently, to the ways of this hard world, and thinking of nothing in particular, he approached a third fire brat, standing as still as the rest, all alone and broadside on.

This one, presumably, did not see him coming, which may be one reason why fire brats are so keen upon living in cracks where other people, friends or foes—and even friends seem to be foes, if one may so put it—were bound to telegraph their approach by touching one or other of the long feelers at head and tail.

Now what happened then was strange. Thermoby strolled up to this third fire brat, which did not move, and did not, apparently, see him coming, even when he was close beside it, and calmly dug it in the ribs with one of his pincers. It was just like a man digging another in the ribs after chaffing him, only that the other, save for one preliminary little wriggle, did not move. And when at last Thermoby backed away, it did not move. Nor when he approached again, and once more dug it in the ribs, did it move. In fact, it never moved any more.

Thermoby had killed it, though how, unless his pincers were poisonous—and there is nothing in books to lead one to suspect that they were—is more than one can tell. The complete absence of fight or struggle, and the calm, cool, deliberate way in which the whole murder was carried out, made up between them a mystery of lugubrious aspect.

Thermoby remained long at that obscene meal. Occasionally he took a little stroll—for what reason is not clear—but he always returned to the "kill." Occasionally, too, he had a visitor, in the shape of another fire brat, gleaming in the fire glow like a ruby set in silver, and received always with angry tail lashings that did not invite close inspection.

Once, also, he got himself chased away by a young cockroach with anything but immature jaws, and he himself chased a very small beetle, who suddenly turned upon him with such fury that he side-streaked into the nearest crack for his life.

And here, to his absolute horror, be it suspected, and much to his scandal, the dawn found him.

THE fire had burned itself out with the stars outside, and a lark had weirdly risen invisibly, singing in the stilly semi-dark, when a stark glare began to creep into the room, and cold—that cold which precedes the dawn—made itself manifest. Also Thermoby's silver, though motionless, body showed up too, for the crack was so very shallow that it failed to hide him.

Nevertheless, to move and flash his position to every foe around, appeared to him to be worse. Anyway, he lay low, and continued to lie low, though a mouse, the same he had already encountered once, gnawed a cheese-rind it had hauled from the table, within an inch of him, till the maid came to light the fire and "do" the hearth.

This episode was always one of concern to the fire brats because of the brush. It could get into crevices that no enemies—except their friends—could, and if it did not slay, it maimed, for it takes very little to knock the edges off a fire brat.

Not that Thermoby got the brush. He happened to be under the maid's knee—you can kneel on a fire brat without any harm done, you know—and the darkness just suited him, till it went. Then he was left in the blinding glare, and for the rest of that day was unhappy and marooned, but not nearly so conspicuous as he had been, for his back gradually began to darken miraculously under the influence of the light, or himself, or both, so that after some time, when you looked at him, you could hardly see him because he showed brown like the boards.

Only his feelers and legs and pincers did not grow brown. They kept their original color, and looked more shrimpy and pinky-white than ever.

As soon as it grew dark Thermoby raced for better cover, and fell, like a soldier dodging for a trench, into a deeper crack, where he promptly tumbled, he thought, among enemies—for they were of his own kind—but found they were two lady fire brats.

None of the fire brats went above board—indeed, their doings were never quite "above board" in the other sense—till the lamp had been put out and the people of the dining-room had gone to bed. But there was much preliminary activity along the crevices and cracks while the lamp was alight.

Everybody was hungry and moving restlessly along, driving the rest before him (or her), so that you met here and there whole lines of fire brats, four or five, moving slowly along a crack in Indian file.

One such group bore down upon Thermoby during the evening. His long tail whips told him of their coming, and when he had lashed himself nearly off his feet by way of warning, and the newcomer still pressed on, he knew, I think, that that same newcomer was being hustled, or at least invited forward by one behind him. At the same time, Thermoby appeared to be in no mood to leave the society of the ladies. It was obvious, also, that he could not just sit still, for we have seen what happens sometimes if you just sit still in fire brat company.

To his brain, or whatever fire brats carry as substitute for a brain proper, however, a middle way was suggested. It was typical of these peculiar insect people, who, though they laid eggs like other insects, never got beyond the first, or larval, or caterpillar stage of life, never turned into chrysalises or pupæ, and never became perfect insects, or imagos, as other insects do, but remained as the egg made them all their lives, though they grew.

Thermoby did not go forward. He did not go back. He did not go anywhere, but he did not stand still. The others, being forced on from behind, ran over him, and as they ran he wriggled, that is, he kept up a perpetual sort of mild buck jump, so that it was impossible for any one of them to retain a footing long enough to give *him* a dig in the ribs, and impossible for them to do anything, in fact, but hurry on, slipping and sliding, as fast as they could.

The last fire brat of the line was, as might have been expected, a very big specimen of his kind, and he, after negotiating Thermoby's agitated back—he tried hard to stop in the middle and investigate—did not go any farther. He, too, one suspects, craved the society of the gentler sex. He had considerably the advantage of Thermoby in size and weight, but that seems to make no vital difference with these strange folk, or, at least, by no means is it a rule you can count upon.

Among a society where all are cannibals, or nearly all, certain of them seem to be set apart as essentially killers, and these not necessarily, though they may be, the largest, though what it is that marks them off from the rest were hard to tell, certainly no visible signs so far could be noticed.

Now Thermoby himself was rather small as good-sized fire brats go, and before he turned dark in the light, and now he had turned light in the dark again, of a slightly more silvery, or aluminum-color, than most, or so it seemed. Yet we have seen what manner of work he had already accomplished, and this is the manner of work he now accomplished too.

The big fellow was now in front of him, with his back to Thermoby, but his triple tail threads made that as safe, almost, as if he had been facing him. The female fire brats were beyond.

For an hour nothing happened.

Then the people of the house went to bed, putting out the lamp, and the fire brats got busy.

The fire threw a steady red glow over the hearth-rug and half of the two armchairs and the table beyond, conjuring out of them dragons of awful aspect. The people there believed in a fire on all but sweltering nights, and the fire brats believed in a fire always. It was their native heath, so to speak.

The heat between the tiles where Thermoby was was so great that nothing else, surely, except fire brats, could have stuck it, and lived. Yet they stuck it, and presently one noticed that somehow Thermoby had managed to nip off one of the big fire brat's three tail feelers. Instant as an electric spark, the other spun upon him, but more instant than that, and yet, somehow, marvelously without seeming to hurry, Thermoby ran in on him.

Thus they stood together for a few seconds, feeling, feeling, feeling with their delicate little pincer arrangements. They looked like very tired and very cautious wrestlers feeling for a hold, only in their case, the hold was a dig between the ringed armor plates—if such delicate plates can be called armor—and the outcome of it meant death.

Suddenly Thermoby dug with one pincer, a quick in-under stroke, quite without viciousness apparently, almost unnoticeably. Nothing particular happened. Neither creature moved. Indeed there was a horrible reptilian aspect about this fight that was not a fight. They talk about the "still hunt." Here was the "still battle."

Minutes passed perhaps, and then one realized suddenly that something had happened. Thermoby's big rival looked droopy, and his antennæ, or front feelers, had ceased to move almost. When Thermoby left him and went for his funny little stroll of victory, the other dragged himself very slowly an inch or two, and was still.

Thermoby went and hid in a crack, watching, presumably, like a cat, but when he came out and again fastened to his foe, the latter was not yet dead. In fact, he was a long time dying, and the fire had smoldered very low when Thermoby finally turned away, satisfied.

When the maid's brush got to work next morning, it disturbed three fire brats, a male and two females, feeding upon a fourth, and larger one. I wonder? But was it the marriage feast?

WOMEN WARRIORS

by H. P.

IT WAS the Indian woman's place to prepare food and clothing, lug firewood and water and till the soil. And yet she was not backward in standing by her husband's side and fighting to the death. In no tribe of American Indians is there any record of women regularly serving as warriors. In the exigence of surprize attacks women, white as well as red, would fight. Mrs. Bozarth, at Dunkard's Creek, West Virginia, in 1779, killed three Indians with an ax within three minutes, after her cabin was attacked and her husband and several others, men and children, had been killed. Yet there are instances of Indian women playing the warrior's part. Timberlake, writing on Cherokee "War Women," says "the reader will not be a little surprized to find the story of the Amazons not so great a fable as we imagine, many of the Indian women being famous in war as powerful in council." Nevertheless the woman warrior was the exception, never the rule.

In 1676 Magnus, a woman chief of the Narraganset, fought with the English near Warwick, R. I., and was killed after her capture. It is not supposed that she was accustomed to bear arms, although probably skilled in their use. When Nathaniel Bacon stormed the Powhatan fort near present Richmond, Virginia, in August 1676, and the blood of the massacred defenders gave the name to Bloody Run, there is no doubt but what the Powhatan women conducted themselves bravely. But as in the majority of cases these were warriors from necessity.

When Rutherford's expedition fought the Cherokees in the Nantahala mountains in 1776, nineteen Americans fell before the Indians could be dislodged. One warrior remained behind a tree and was shot. It proved to be a woman, painted and armed for warrior. A wound in the thigh had prevented her escape with the men. Here is an example of a woman deliberately taking the war-path and playing a man's part. Another woman during the Revolutionary war killed the slayer of her husband and rallied the demoralized Cherokee and led them to victory. After that she was allowed to carry gun and tomahawk and participate in the war-dance.

GILFORD the GIFTED

Robert Simpson

Author of "Taking Over Gettison," "The Swan Song of Knife-Edge Harrington," etc.

WITH the coming of the sun, Gilford rose from his knees, leaned his rifle against the salt and sand bags in front of him and yawned.

"What a —— night! Who staged this asinine business anyway?"

Harth looked up sleepily. He was a fat and large and altogether surprizing person and he looked at Gilford out of two prominent blue eyes that exaggerated the redness of his hair. He had a reputation for doing things—unusual things—from taming tarantulas and omitting quinin to whistling like a prize linnet and trifling with two-hundred-and-forty-pound kegs of lead shot as if they were cricket balls.

"Don't know," he grunted in reply to Gilford's disgusted query. "Foster, maybe. Cigaret?"

Gilford accepted one of Harth's cigarets, lighted it lazily and glanced carelessly about him. Inside the barricade around the Benin City consulate, other men were rising to their feet expressing their disgust in no uncertain terms, while faithful ebony body-servants scurried into the consulate kitchen in pursuit of steaming cups of cocoa and other beverages in the hope of allaying the early morning irritation of their masters.

None of them, however, was more disgusted with the situation than Gilford.

Tall, broad, his leonine head reaching proudly above the level of ordinary mortals, Gilford at once gave the impression of being able and anxious to finish anything to which he set his hand, and also of attempting much that the majority would never dream of beginning.

He had been ordered up from Marsden & Co.'s trading factory at Sapeli to the company's mahogany concession at Rawyafa and had reached Benin City at sundown the previous evening.

Instead of the comforting bath he had expected after his long tramp through the bush, he had been met by Harth, who was in charge of Marsden's Benin City establishment, and was hurried post-haste to the consulate.

There Gilford had at once become possessed of a sense of seething unrest and a rifle. Impending disaster lurked ominously on the fringe of the bush beyond the battered mud wall that encircled the old Benin stronghold.

And when he had learned in plain language that the Bini was momently expected to raise Cain again, he took his place behind a low barricade of salt and sand bags, informing Harth that the incident reminded him of an uncle of his who had fought at Rorke's Drift.

While they waited for the Bini to emulate the Zulu, Gilford furnished a monotoned description of the heroic defense of Rorke's Drift in minute detail. It had been a good fight and apparently his uncle had been in the thick of it most of the time.

"He had to be," Gilford declared dryly.

"Gilford the Gifted, copyright, 1922, by Robert Simpson.

"There was nowhere a man could go to shirk that scrap."

He referred to Lieutenants Chard and Bromhead, to the 24th Regiment and to the majority of the thirty-odd men who had been in hospital, with the familiarity of one who was intimately acquainted with the history of almost every man who had taken part in the defense of the drift.

And altogether, it was an excellent story, convincingly told.

The only fault that might have been found with it, was that Gilford had never had an uncle to his name.

Harth, of course, did not know this, and while the mosquitoes and sand-flies kept them awake without any difficulty or diffidence, while the rebellious Bini remained silent hour after hour, Gilford hugged the shelter of the salt and sand bags and whisperingly told Harth more stories, the locale of which ranged from Bagdad and Baltimore, to the mouth of the Hoogli and the snows that lie north of Nome.

Gilford played no part in these tales. They were the vigorous experiences of relatives or friends scattered widely upon the face of the earth, and Harth received the impression that Gilford was more than singularly fortunate in the selection of his friends and in the upstanding quality of his numerous relatives.

They always came out on top in a modest, retiring sort of way, determined to spend the remainder of their lives dodging the lime-light.

Gilford, however, refused to accept their apologies. Neither did he think it necessary to consider their feelings by concealing their real names. In fact, every one of them had a nickname which always required an explanation, so that Gilford was under the necessity, as a rule, of dovetailing a story within a story.

In short, he was the kind of liar who made prevarication attractive. He was so appallingly convincing.

THE Bini evidently decided that the white man's long range rifles would be too much for him, and before eleven o'clock breakfast the threat of rebellion had sputtered out like a firecracker that failed to go off.

Gilford was informed by Captain Foster of the Waffs (West African Frontier Forces) that he thought it would be reasonably safe for him to continue his journey to Rawyafa the following day.

And next morning, while Harth looked over the carriers to be sure they were above suspicion and would not be likely to lose Gilford on the way, the latter was reminded of a friend of his who thought a centipede was a caterpillar. But he hadn't time to finish the story then.

"I'll tell you about it when I come back," he promised generously.

Then, as the string of black boys started off in single file, he added—

"Maybe my carriers are just caterpillars, but I'll consider them centipedes until further notice."

Nevertheless, despite such mental precautions, Gilford sat upon a carrier's pack at the junction of three bush paths two afternoons later, and wondered which of the paths led to Rawyafa.

He was afraid none of them did and there were no carriers or guides to help him decide the question. As nearly as Gilford could understand it, the district immediately to the north was in an unfriendly humor, and his carriers had decided, with the aid of palm wine and a desire to stop working, that it would be safer to complete the journey in the opposite direction.

They had left their packs behind them to facilitate their retreat and Gilford and laboriously collected his effects into a heap and was hopefully awaiting the appearance of some one who would be good enough to direct him to the nearest native village.

There was something less than half an hour between him and darkness. He was entirely surrounded by the impenetrable maze of the bush, and he was not at all blind to the danger of wandering around in circles, and of stumbling into unfriendly Bini villages in the dark. But as he sat upon the pack and smoked, he was reminded of a cousin of his who had gone temporarily out of his head at Port Said.

This cousin's name was Arthur, but he had been known as Chip from infancy and, being in truth a chip of the old block, he had taken to the sea as naturally as water takes to the course of least resistance.

Chip was making his first trip as second engineer when the Port Said adventure overtook him. Gilford was not sure what the adventure was as yet, but if there had been any one to tell it to, the details would undoubtedly have become known to him in their proper sequence, rounded off with a climax to suit the occasion.

And Yuleela did not solve that particular difficulty. Gilford could not lie in pidgin-English. It cramped his style.

Yuleela came along one of the three paths—the one on Gilford's right—a lithely, swaying study in red and black and yellow. Her overcloth was red, her color was polished ebony and the silk handkerchief that was rakishly wound about her head, on which a calabash was balanced, was yellow and red and black. Her little naked feet brought her soundlessly to Gilford's side, and when he threw his cigaret away he saw her looking inquiringly down at him.

"What's matter?" she asked with the quiet assurance of a large experience. "Your carrier man done lef' you?"

Gilford's first impression was that she spoke unusually good English; his second that, though she was a Bini, she had the lines and the finish of a Warri girl; his third, that he had seen her before, either at Benin City or at Sapeli.

"I go Rawyafa," he told her and rose. "You savvy which place I fit to get 'nother carrier man?"

The girl nodded. She had seen Gilford at Marsden's beach at Sapeli and she was by no means unacquainted with Rawyafa.

"Wait li'l bit," she said in a low voice. "Be all ri'. I go bring carrier man one time."

"Fine! Which place you go get him?"

"Myoka-town. Be my fadder town. My fadder be big man for dis country."

"I'm darned glad to hear it. What's your name?"

"My fadder's name be Myoka. My name be Yuleela."

"Nice name. Nice girl. Go bring carrier man."

Yuleela disappeared around a bend in the path at the right, and Gilford ate palm oil chop in Myoka-town that night.

It was a filthy little hotch-potch of mud and thatch and Gilford was not sure whether the smells put him to sleep or kept him awake, but he knew that Yuleela was not a regular inhabitant. She was the country girl who had gone down into the city and had returned to show the old home town how much it had missed.

Myoka, who was a scrawny, neutral personality, paid no attention to her. He told Gilford, in grunting monosyllables, that there was no "shoot palaver" brewing anywhere in the Bini country and that his, Gilford's, carriers had been fools for running away.

Gilford hoped he could believe him. The price he had to pay for Myoka's hospitality and for the new string of carriers, gave a strong flavor of doubt to the grasping old Bini's information.

At six A.M. next morning, when Gilford found Yuleela walking behind him as the carriers filed out of Myoka-town, he was naturally surprized and just a little suspicious.

"Which place you go?"

"Rawyafa," the girl answered simply.

Gilford's eyebrows lifted.

"What you go dere for?"

"I married for dat place."

"Married—eh?"

"Yessah. I take you dere, sah."

"Hunh!"

Gilford faced front again and thought it over. It might be all right, of course, but——

"Which man you marry at Rawyafa?" he asked rather sharply.

Yuleela's smile was queer.

"I marry colo' gen'man, sah."

"One of Marsden's colored overseers?"

"Yessah," quietly. "Him name Soliden, sah."

"Don't know him. But that's fine and I'm in luck if you're not lying like a shop thief."

Then to the ever lagging carriers collectively, he added:

"Edge, bushman, edge! Make quick! *Animo! Animo!*"

The final word was Kroo, but all along the West Coast of Africa, from Grand Cess to Old Calabar, Kroo headmen had been shouting it at the pitch of their voices for many years. And in the pagan belt, at least, for those who toiled under the weight of the white man's burdens, it had the universal significance of the North-western, "Mush!"

For a hundred yards or so the carriers quickened their step a trifle, then reduced it to normal.

Yuleela's pace had not altered in the slightest. She was in no hurry to reach Rawyafa. It was her settled opinion that when she arrived there she would have to kill or be killed. Soliden, the half-caste overseer who had paid her father the marriage price, would probably insist upon it.

Even in the Bini country, where it had not been thought altogether ethical to wash, until the white man had introduced the insidious vanity of gleaming bars of yellow soap, it was not considered advisable to stay married to a man who spoiled the smooth perfection of one's back with a hippo-hide thong.

That was why Yuleela had been so prompt in supplying Gilford with a new batch of carriers. She thought it would be politic to return to Rawyafa under his beneficent protection.

So that, while Gilford believed himself to have been extremely lucky in having met her, she had reason to consider herself luckier in being privileged to be of assistance to him.

She followed at his heels in respectful silence, mile upon mile, while the bush world screeched and chattered and slithered out of sight at their approach.

Occasionally they encountered straggling Bini travelers who, for the greater part, gave an impression of almost everything but fight. Most of them backed off the narrow path into the bush and peered out at Gilford and his retinue with all the diffidence of frightened rabbits. Others, less fearful of the white man's *ju-ju*, simply stepped aside and waited in beetle-browed silence for Gilford to pass.

Few of them had anything to say and the nearer Gilford drew to Rawyafa, the more convinced he became that the rumors of an uprising in the Benin country had been greatly exaggerated.

When the noonday halt was called, Gilford naturally shared his lunch with Yuleela, and observed that she was not unaccustomed to white man's rations.

"You been Sapeli some time?" he asked casually.

Yuleela balanced some tinned salmon on a biscuit and nibbled at it as if she were not very hungry.

"Yessah. Be dere Soliden look me first time."

Gilford nodded.

"Thought I'd seen you before somewhere. How long time you done marry Soliden?"

"One year pass."

"You like Rawyafa?"

"Li'l bit."

Gilford laughed.

"But Sapeli is besser, no be so?"

Yuleela did not admit that Sapeli was better or worse. And she tried to forgive Gilford for his laughter. She hoped he would not at any time laugh at Soliden like that.

THE Rawyafa mahogany concession headquarters were situated on Rawyafa creek. A three room, corrugated iron and pitch pine residence for Marsden & Co.'s solitary white representative and a number of mud and thatch outbuildings for the normally permanent native help, suggested to the average newcomer on his arrival that it was not impossible to live there.

Some of them had not held to this opinion very long. As a rule they were young and untutored in the ways of the wilds, and it was not easy to become accustomed to a place that teemed with life and yet was empty and dank and silent as a tomb.

The white man in charge of Rawyafa could consider himself fortunate if he saw another white face once in six months.

Under his supervision were three Sierra Leonese overseers and Soliden. Soliden is placed in a category all his own because he was a sinister admixture of Ijo, Lagos-man and Syrian. Therefore, Soliden had a start in life that was almost incredible. As Farquhar of Benin River put it:

"The Lord never intended any man to have to live all of that down in one lifetime. It makes ye think there may be something in the laws o' Manu after all."

The overseers were camped at vantage points throughout the length and breadth of the concession, and Soliden was in charge of the section known as the Little Rawyafa.

Gilford had to pass through Soliden's territory on the way up to headquarters and shortly after four in the afternoon, just as he was assuring himself that he had had enough tramping for one West African day, Yuleela sidled up to him and respectfully touched his elbow.

"I t'ink so you tire?"

"I'm sure of it," Gilford agreed and thought he heard the sound of many voices shouting in the distance.

It was followed by the equally distant crashing of a heavily falling body of some sort.

"What's that?"

"Be tree fall down. Axman cut him, sah. Soliden live dere."

She indicated a narrow path that led off to the left and added quietly:

"Mebbe so it be besser if you hab li'l bit chop and li'l bit sleep. Soliden, he glad to look you, sah. Be all ri' suppose you catch Rawyafa tomorrow time?"

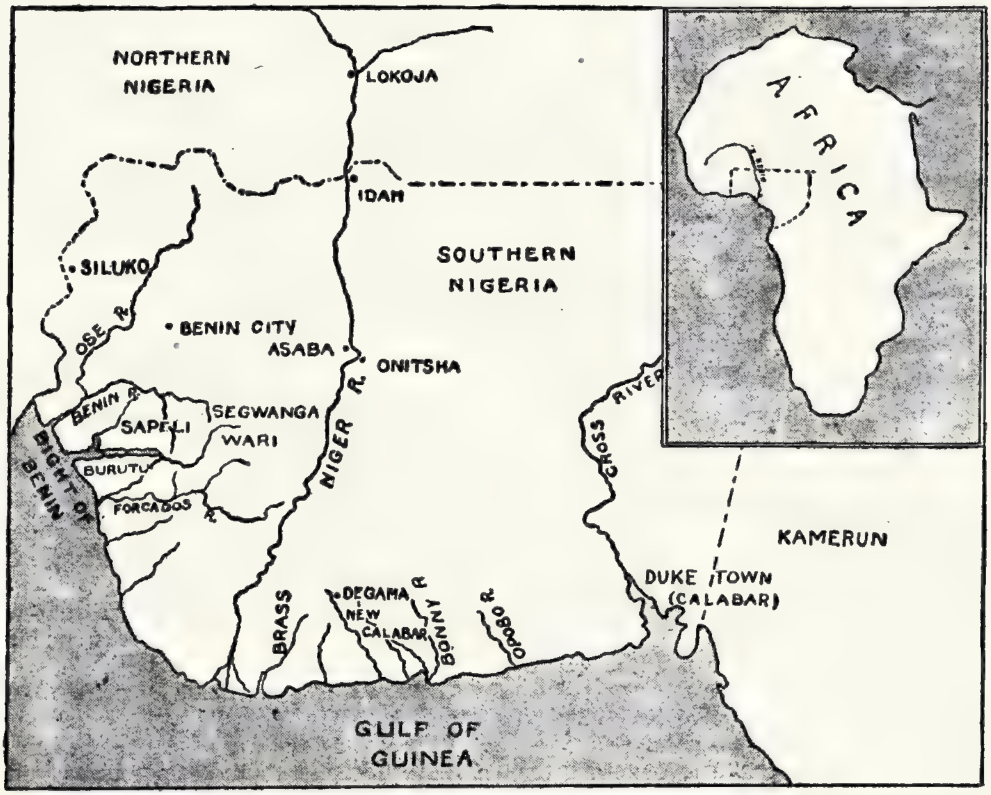
Gilford demurred for the sake of appearances. In reality, he was dog tired, sticky and hungry and generally receptive to any suggestion that would take him off his feet. At the pace his carriers were making, the chances were that he would not arrive at headquarters until long after dinner, and Grant, the man he was going up to relieve probably did not expect him till tomorrow in any case.

"All right. We knock off. Tomorrow time I go catch Rawyafa plenty quick."

Just the faintest spark of relief enlivened Yuleela's eyes for a moment and she exhaled a long deep breath without a sound.

Then, with a sharp order to the carriers, she smiled an invitation to Gilford to follow her and led the way to Soliden's camp.

Soliden was in bed. This was his favorite method of employing the sun-flayed hours of the afternoon from one o'clock till three or after.


NORTHERN NIGERIA
LOKOJA
IDAH
SILUKO
OSE R.
BENIN CITY
ASABA
ONITSHA
SOUTHERN NIGERIA
BENIN R.
SAPELI
SEGWANGA
WARI
BURUTU
FORCADOS R.
BIGHT OF BENIN
NIGER R.
CROSS RIVER
KAMERUN
DUKE TOWN (CALABAR)
BRASS
DEGAMA
NEW CALABAR
BONNY R.
OPOBO R.
GULF OF GUINEA
AFRICA

Now and then, if he conceived the notion that the headmen of his cutting and squaring and hauling gangs were not sending the prospected logs down fast enough, he might condescend to work in the mornings. But the headmen always regretted it if he did.

When he went prospecting, which was compulsory if there were to be any log rafts to float down to the Benin River shipping station, he traveled in a hammock more religiously than even the most indolent of white men cared to do.

But he found trees. Between mahogany and Soliden there seemed to be a kind of affinity. He wasted few steps on false and fruitless trails, and could prospect more "logs" fit for shipment in a day than the majority of overseers could stumble upon in three. Therein lay his genius, and the reason why he was permitted to govern the Little Rawyafa in his own way and yet remain in the employ of Marsden & Co.

He was not a big man. There was more of the wasp than the elephant in Soliden. His eyes were a bright brown that was almost red and his color was a pale yellow with blotches of drab brown scattered through it. His nose had a slight Semitic tendency that had doubtless descended from his Syrian progenitors.

Yuleela was his only wife. The marriage price had been two puncheons of palm oil, a second hand four-paddle canoe, and a cooler (twenty-eight bushels) of kernels that had measured three bushels short. He had considered her cheap at the price.

Now, however, he was tired of her. There was too much of the bush cat in her disposition and too little fear of Soliden in her heart. It was no secret to him that her visit to Myoka-town had been made in the hope of borrowing from her father enough oil to help buy back her freedom. The balance would be furnished by one of Soliden's own headmen—Hoduna the axman.

Soliden was not asleep. He heard the commotion caused by the arrival of Gilford and his carriers, and, rising from his mosquito-curtained bed, he poked his head inquiringly out of the window-hole of his bedroom.

Yuleela was walking toward him and, long before she reached him, he knew that she had returned empty-handed.

"Mas' Gi'ford come look you," she said quietly. "He go Rawyafa tomorrow time."

Soliden cursed Yuleela fluently in Bini, but she paid no heed to that. As Gilford approached, she turned to him and said simply:

"Dis be Soliden, sah. I go fix tea. Morning time you catch Rawyafa plenty quick."

Gilford nodded as Soliden climbed through the window to shake hands.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Gilford," the overseer said in his best Lagos-acquired "consulate" English, which was correct enough when he watched every word, but which became broad and thick and choppy when he was not so careful. "I had a touch of fever this mornin'. But I'se a little better now. Come inside and sit down, sah, till mah wife fixes you tea and a place foh you to sleep."

"Thanks, Soliden, I will. My carriers deserted me yesterday afternoon, but, luckily for me, your wife and her father came to my rescue. Any trouble in this section?"

"Trouble, sah?"

"Shooting—Bini rebellion—that kind of thing?"

"No, sah. Not a hint of it, sah. We'se quiet as a daid mosquito 'round here, sah."

"Humh!"

Gilford lowered his head to pass into the living-room of Soliden's hut and clumped into the nearest chair.

"One of those boys out there has my cigarets and things. Get them for me, will you? And tell him to prepare my bath water one time."

Soliden, apparently, was only too anxious to please. He did all that could be done to make the new white representative of Marsden & Co. as comfortable as possible and several times expressed his unqualified pleasure that his wife had been fortunate enough to have had the distinguished opportunity of being of assistance to Mr. Gilford.

Gilford did not like Soliden. He did not like his eyes or the odd snaky movements of his long, blunt-fingered hands. And he could readily imagine that Yuleela, upon occasion, had a "rotten time of it" with so smooth a brute as that.

But when Gilford had bathed in a kerosene can of piping hot water and had partaken of afternoon tea just as faithfully as at Sapeli, and was topping it off with a leisurely whisky-and-soda, he appreciated the circumstance that Soliden could understand straight English. So he offered him a cigaret and said—

"My carriers deserting me like that reminds me of a cousin of mine who got into an odd kind of mess in Port Said."

"Yes, sah. Po't Said? Where's dat, sah?"

"Er—it's at one end of the Suez Canal," Gilford declared carefully, not being quite sure just which end was the right one. "It's a filthy hole, full of dives and dens and general indecency and everybody goes there at some time or another."

This was not orginal with Gilford. He had heard or read about it somewhere; but Soliden was not up on literature or geography, so it did not matter very much. He nodded in pretense of understanding what Gilford meant and the latter went on just a little haltingly.

"My cousin's name was Jim, but we always called him Chip. He was the second engineer on a cargo boat out of Hull and as it was his first trip eastward, he made a point of investigating Port Said pretty thoroughly.

"In the course of his investigations he—I mean, as he was looking around, passing from one dingy, narrow street to another along the—er—waterfront, he suddenly found himself in the middle of a scrap between the badly mixed crews of two dirty little tramp steamers belonging to a couple of rival East India companies in Bombay or Madras—I forget which.

"Chip was not keen about getting the details of the business. He wanted to get out of there as quickly and as safely as possible. So he didn't stop to inquire what the scrap was all about. He was getting out pretty nicely, too, when some one caught him suddenly from behind and something that, for a second perhaps, felt like a piece of silk-covered wire touched the sides of his neck.

"A second later—well, you've never seen a grocer cut a cheese with a thin piece of wire fastened to two sticks. But that's what Chip thought was happening to his throat and neck. That is, as long as he was conscious enough to know anything.

"Then, he felt himself slide off into nowhere and everything was black."

Gilford paused. Soliden was attentive enough but bewildered. His grasp of the details was too confused to make him a very encouraging listener. Therefore, Gilford, who was jealous of his climax, tried to make it easier for him.

"Do you know what a violin or a fiddle is?"

"Yessah. Mista' MacGregor at Segwanga has a fiddle."

"Right. Ever look at the strings of a fiddle?"

"Yessah."

"Well, there's a class of people in India called Thugs who take long fiddle-strings and put a noose on them and drop the noose around the necks of people they don't like. Then they pull the noose tight and——"

Gilford pantomimed the rest.

Soliden threw his head back, opened his mouth wide and filled the swiftly falling darkness with laughter that was loud and long.

"Well," Gilford went on, "that was what happened to Chip."

"He daid!"

"No. But he doesn't know why he isn't. When he woke up he was on board his own ship, but for days he was quite a bit out of his head. Nothing could convince him that his head hadn't been separated from his body. His throat was all bound up, of course, and he had a wild notion that the bandages were all that kept his head on his shoulders.

"In other words, he felt sure that he had been beheaded the way a grocer splits a cheese and that if he moved the least little bit his head would roll away from his body. Of course, it was only imagination, but to this day, all the way around Chip's neck, there is a thin hair-line mark. And it isn't red. It's black."

Soliden did not appreciate it. He had never seen a cheese just after the wire cutter had passed through it.

So that Gilford, whose camp bed had been put up in an empty hut adjoining, sought sleep early that night with a depressing sense of disappointment upon him, muttering something about pearls and swine.

SOLIDEN had little to say to Yuleela for the greater part of the evening, and she marveled somewhat at his unusual reticence. As a rule, when he knew that she was discouraged or apprehensive about anything, his methods of tormenting her into anger so that he might enjoy the pleasure of subduing her again, were more than usually devilish.

And he knew that she was disappointed in her failure to borrow the necessary oil from Myoka so that she might become the wife of Hoduna the axman. In fact, Soliden liked to think that Yuleela wanted to marry Hoduna, and could not. He liked even better to know that the axman was one of his own headmen, compelled to listen and sometimes actually to witness Yuleela's pain and degradation without being able to move hand or foot.

In Whitechapel or Fifth Avenue, it is not good to interfere between a man and his wife. It is something akin to suicide in the mud-built villages of the Niger swamps. Yuleela would not have permitted it or understood it in any case.

Soliden, therefore, tortured two souls and laughed while the want of a puncheon of golden yellow oil stood between them and their desire.

But, this evening he did not laugh. He sat under the light of a stand lamp and played with a piece of thin, black rosined string—the kind that was used for binding broken adze or ax handles.

Even when Yuleela went down to the creek for water and was compelled to pass the hut of Hoduna the axman on the way, Soliden continued to trifle with the piece of thin black string until the noose he made worked every time without the slightest hitch.

Hoduna, in the simplicity of a loin-cloth, sat before the door of his hut sharpening his ax as Yuleela passed by. He did not raise his head. When she returned, he was standing with one hand resting lightly on the haft of the ax.

No word was spoken, and certainly, Hoduna never thought of offering to carry the water. If he observed Yuleela at all, it was only to draw her attention to the splendor of his own physical attributes. And there was no question about Hoduna's magnificence. From his broad powerfully muscled shoulders to his lean, fleet ankles, he was sculptured perfection in dark glistening bronze.

Yuleela passed on, her head lifting proudly at every step until the darkness swallowed her. Then Hoduna sat down again and resumed the sharpening of his ax.

* * *

WHEN Soliden slipped the thin black noose about Yuleela's neck the first time, and gave it a sharp, tightening jerk, he was in a playful humor. Yuleela's sudden choking gasp of surprize, followed by a staring glint of fear, made him laugh heartily, his head thrown back and his mouth wide open.

It was a new game and Yuleela's expression amused him, and when she tried to scratch furiously like a wild cat, he pulled the noose a little tighter just to see if it would have the desired effect.

It had. And he laughed still louder when he saw how funnily Yuleela's hands stopped trying to reach his face and flew in a panic to her throat again.

He found, too, that the thing could be done with one hand. This was interesting. It opened up unthought-of fields of endeavor and suggested new ways of performing old tricks. Soliden released Yuleela reluctantly, sat down again and thought it over.

Crouching away from him, drawing deep, stabbing breaths into her lungs, Yuleela gradually recovered her strength and a surer comprehension of what had happened to her.

At first, as, in the blackness outside, the camp of the Little Rawyafa was dropping off to sleep, the horror of the thin black noose made her shiver with dread. It was too new to be understood in a moment and the awful feeling of helplessness she had known, as Soliden had tightened it about her throat, gave her pause.

But Yuleela was not of the mold to submit to husbandly domination of that sort in silence and without a fight. And presently, in savage indignation and hate, she cursed Soliden in Bini, in his own Lagos tongue, and in pidgin-English.

"You be yellow pig!" she told him, beside herself with terror and rage and subconsciously quoting a Benin City white man's estimation of her husband. "If you do so for me 'gain, I kill you! I cut your heart. I cut your —— head 'way!"

Soliden trifled with the thin black noose and listened with a leer until she called him a yellow pig. Then his smile drifted. He thought his wife was reminding him purposely of the unpleasant circumstances under which the Benin City white man had called him by that name, and he sat looking at Yuleela very intently, his red brown eyes seeming to become more and more red every moment.

When he rose and lunged forward suddenly, Yuleela screamed and bolted for the door.

But Soliden in trousers was faster than his wife in an impeding overcloth.

It was Yuleela's second scream that awoke Gilford. He sat bolt upright in bed, and listening, heard yet another shriek of fear and agony that broke off so suddenly that Gilford shivered and stepped rather hesitatingly into his mosquito-boots.

When he reached the door of his hut, the only visible light was Soliden's, and he directed his steps toward it dubiously, with a decided feeling of uneasiness. The rest of the village or camp was so deathly still that Gilford wondered if the screams he had heard existed only in his imagination.

Then he heard a sound that was not unfamiliar to him; a sound that made him go the rest of the way swiftly on tip-toe.

"I be yellow pig—eh? Me, Soliden, be yellow pig!"

Gilford heard the half-caste's voice quite distinctly, and it was followed by the ugly, unmistakable sound of a hippo hide thong descending viciously upon naked flesh.

He poked his head in suddenly at Soliden's window and, for a moment perhaps, halted there agape.

Not much more than a yard away, Soliden stood with his left arm outstretched, the hand close to the back of Yuleela's neck. In his right there was a hippo hide thong.

Gilford did not quite know why Yuleela stood so still at arm's length with nothing to prevent her escape except two fingers and the thumb of Soliden's left hand pushing into the back of her neck. Then Gilford caught a glimpse of the girl's face just as Soliden raised the hippo hide again.

"You ruddy thug!" he whispered hoarsely, more to himself than to Soliden, and leaped into the room.

Soliden turned his head, jumped back in surprize and released his grip on the thin black noose about Yuleela's throat. The girl swayed drunkenly and sank to her knees just as Gilford's first punch took the half-caste neatly on the point of the jaw and flung him back upon his heels against the mat hung wall.

For several minutes Soliden received the thrashing of his life. It was a thrashing that carried him cowering and whining from one end of the dim little room to the other and back again. Doubled up with a left that searched his vitals, he was almost immediately straightened with a right uppercut that seemed to lift his head from his shoulders.

Then Gilford would smash him without any discount on the nose, tilt his chin into position with a lifting jab, and then wallop him on the jaw again so that he spun like a wabbling top until something stopped him.

It was not a fight. Simply a thrashing, administered by a man who understood his business so well that he thought nothing of it and would not consider that part of the story worth the telling afterward.

Yuleela staggered to her feet, plucking the thin black noose from her tortured throat, and thereafter huddled near the window and watched the amazing spectacle of Soliden being struck again and again without even attempting to strike back.

Then she saw the half-caste sink to his knees, his right hand clutching the hippo hide thong in a fury that, momentarily at least, was as impotent as Soliden was sick.

And he was very sick. He shuddered convulsively with pain and rage and the lamp in its stand in the far corner was like a tiny match flame that was ready to flicker out.

Gilford dropped his hands and learned how tired they were. He was breathing heavily, too, and he waited a little while before he tried to speak.

"You—you ——, murdering hound! You ruddy yellow thug!"

Gilford took another breath.

"What sort of way is that to treat a woman? I don't give a hang about your family differences, but when your squabbles wake me up and ask me to look at a performance like that—why, you yellow dog! You're worse than any Ijo bushman! I've a —— good mind to tie you up and flog the fear of —— into you and change the color of your liver. Give me that hippo hide!"

Soliden did not stir. His reeling senses were coming back to him and a vengeful ferocity was creeping up and up into his dulled brain. Into his little red eyes there came a slowly brightening light.

Gilford turned to Yuleela.

"Go bring headman. Make quick."

Yuleela hesitated, and in that second, while Gilford's attention was directed elsewhere, Soliden leaped and struck.

The hippo hide curled about Gilford's head like a band of fire that passed scorchingly across his eyes. And the light went out.

"—— you!" Gilford's hand went up to his eyes instinctively as the first lightning-like stab of pain shot through them. "You've blinded me! I can't see! I can't see!"

He lurched against the wall and heard Soliden laugh. Yuleela screeched something in Bini, and the sounds came out of a pain-wracked blackness that was punctured with stabbing points of light.

The hippo hide followed them. It fell viciously upon Gilford's head, about his ears, across his shoulders, and the savage hissing breath of Soliden's mad fury echoed every blow. The suit of pajamas Gilford wore offered but little resistance and there was no way in which he could defend himself.

There was a searing strip of flame before his eyes that transcended all else. Nothing was sure save that. Soliden's brutish passion and the relentless ferocity of his revenge was such that the hippo hide cut Gilford's pajama coat in strips across the shoulders and bit into his flesh until his neck and back and arms were flecked with blood. But Gilford thought only of his eyes, as, inch by inch swearing most foully in his agony, he sank into the dust.

And then, vaguely, he knew that the lashings of the hippo hide had ceased. There was a new commotion all about him; the confusion of upraised voices speaking in a guttural tongue, and the threshing of struggling bodies.

He could hear Soliden's voice and that of Yuleela. But there was a third voice he did not recognize.

And suddenly the struggling stopped; the voices became mere whisperings that drifted farther and farther away until there was nothing left save the hellish fury in his eyes.

WHEN Gilford awoke or returned to consciousness—and he was not sure whether he had gone to sleep or fainted—he was alone.

The uncanny silence that enshrouded him had, if anything, grown deeper and the sound of his own voice was hollow and unreal. He did not know whether it was night or day. No one answered his hoarse calls for help. The camp of the Little Rawyafa had apparently been deserted.

Gilford tried to sit quite still and think this over. The pain in his eyes had dulled so that he was more aware of the stiff aches about his shoulders and arms, but when he tried to lift his eyelids to see, he bent his head quickly, flung his arm across his eyes and crouched away from the glinting stab of light as from the point of a rapier.

It told him, however, that he was not altogether blind, and after a while he struggled to his feet and stood with his back to the wall trying to achieve a more coherent grasp of the situation.

Evidently he had been purposely deserted at Soliden's instigation. The camp was Soliden's and the camp headman and his gang were also, without much doubt, of Soliden's selection, and would, of necessity, depart when he did.

Where Soliden had gone, whether he would come back or not and whether Grant at the Rawyafa headquarters was likely to come down that way in a day or a week, were questions that suggested themselves to Gilford in the course of his desperate attempt to think in a straight line.

But there were no answers to these questions and cohesive reasoning did not remain with Gilford long. His pains and the terror of his blindness would send his mind wandering off at a tangent that ultimately led him into fantastic realms of thought until he discovered himself groping his way through a maze of highly colored impossibilities, or found himself in a wilderness that was as black and pitiless as death itself.

There were moments when Gilford wanted to die. There were others when he wanted more than anything to live and to see, so that he could find Soliden and write "Paid" in large, red letters at the bottom of the account.

Just then he was afraid to move. He tried to find his way to the window, then realized that he was safer where he was. He argued with himself about this for hours that were, to him, like many days. And it was the one subject on which reason triumphed in spite of panic and the frantic need of the touch of a human hand and the sound of a voice other than his own.

He knew, if it were day, the sun would kill him in short order, because he had no sun helmet, and he would—if he ever found it at all—probably take hours to discover the hut he had slept in. If it were night, he would be likely to break his neck, or walk into the creek or wander off into the bush, which would be the worst of all.

Every little while, as the hours dragged on, he would try to reach the window, but always he would stop, pull himself desperately together again, and sit down on the floor and wait.

When he did this, he would also hold his head between his knees, fold his arms about them, and excluding the light as well as he could, would try to open his eyes.

The experiment was an expensive one, and the result unlovely. Face down upon the floor, gripping his head tightly in his arms, Gilford writhed in his pain and clung to his reason with the frenzied clutch of the man who knows that madness is upon him.

Sometimes he could hear the scuffing rush of a house lizard as it pounced upon an unwary moth, and then would follow the furious burring flutter of the moth's wings at regular intervals until the lizard had completely conquered, and silence fell again.

Even the creeping life in the surrounding bush seemed to have gone farther away, and as Gilford strained his ears to listen, and sent forth croaking cries for help, the heaviness of the quiet that followed crushed down upon him like an inexorable judgment of doom.

Then, in sheer exhaustion, he slept. When he awoke there was no change, except that his eyes did not hurt quite so much when he tried to see.

But again there were hours and hours of waiting, of frantic hope and ungovernable fear; hours of shrinking helplessness and of awed and whispering prayers; hours that drew Gilford down and down into a kind of humility he had not known before.

Toward the end of that second period of wakefulness he was whimpering a little, and when, at the beginning of what was, to him, the fourth dawn, he discovered that he could see just a little, he leaped wildly to his feet and stumbled crazily toward the window.

Soliden's big Madeira chair got in his way and he halted there, with his hands shading his eyes from the light as they stung him viciously into the exercise of caution whether he would or not.

When he opened them again warily, he did not attempt to face the light, but held his head down and peered at the floor just in advance of his feet.

He shuffled his way around the chair and held on to it as long as he could when he had passed beyond it. Just as his finger tips were relinquishing the assurance the chair gave, he leaped back a step and an involuntary cry burst from his parched and cracking lips.

Soliden was lying there.

Gilford could have touched the overseer with his outstretched foot. Presently looking blearily down at him and not seeing him very distinctly, Gilford whispered:

"Soliden! *Soliden!*"

There was no answer, nor any movement of any sort, and after calling again and again with the same result, Gilford stuck out his foot and excitedly tapped Soliden's shoulder with his toe.

Soliden scarcely moved. But his head wabbled violently.

And rolled away from his body about a foot.

SOMETHING that wore a tattered suit of pajamas, a battered sun helmet and what was left of a pair of mosquito-boots, fell into Harth's sitting-room above Marsden & Co.'s Benin City shop several evenings later and promptly went to sleep on the floor.

For a moment, in the doorway, Harth had a glimpse of a lithely built Bini girl whose color scheme was red and yellow and black.

"I bring him," he heard her say simply, as he hurriedly put aside a month-old newspaper; but before he had an opportunity to question the girl or even to identify her, she had slipped swiftly and noiselessly away.

Harth took a second look at the man on the floor, picked him up with amazing ease and carried him into his bedroom. Whereupon Gilford woke up and murmured distantly.

"I kicked his head off."

While Harth bathed him gently and applied cold cloths to his eyes, Gilford added confidentially:

"Funniest thing you ever saw. I kicked his head off—away off—and then I put on my helmet and walked out. Just walked out. Nothing else for you to do, you know, after you've kicked a man's head off like that. Fight's over."

Harth listened, of course, but did not put any faith in Gilford's babblings. He saw the marks of the hippo hide and Gilford's eyes told their own story. A clinical thermometer disclosed a temperature of one hundred and four.

After quite a long period of silence, as Harth continued to apply cold cloths to his patient's eyes, Gilford fumbled about his head inquiringly with his hands, then asked in a low, secretive voice—

"Where is my helmet?"

"I have it here. Why?"

"What's the color of the inside of the brim now?"

"Green, of course. A bit faded, but still green."

"Green?"

"Certainly."

"That's good. I hope it stays that way. It hasn't been green since I kicked Soliden's head off. After that it became yellow, then red, then black, changing, you know, always changing, like a—like a—oh, one of those whirligig things with colors on it. And she wouldn't let me sleep. Yelled at me. *Animo! Animo!* Just like a ruddy Kroo headman. Damnable!"

A pause.

"May I sleep now, please?"

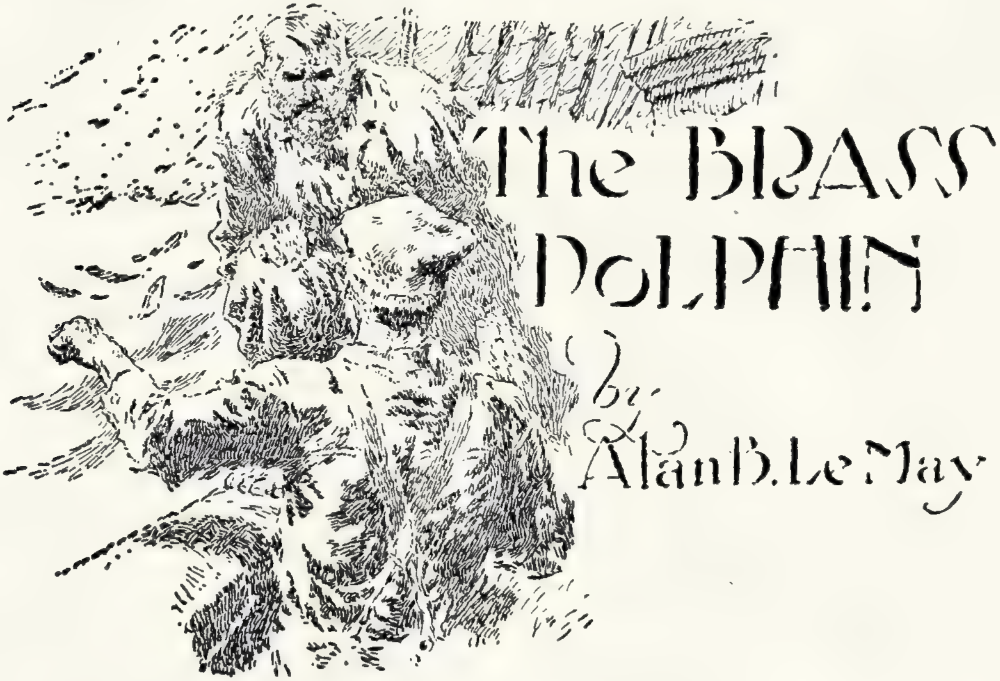
"Surely. Go ahead."

"Thanks," drowsily. "Decent of you."

NOTHING that was official ever came of the incident, and there were but two men who did not forget how Soliden had died.

One of them was Hoduna the axman, who with Yuleela, his wife, migrated to Siluko, where he could remember and smile in peace.

Gilford did not smile.



The BRASS DOLPHIN

by

Alan B. Le May

Author of "Hullabaloo."

WHEN Nels Larsen shanghaied Dick Flynn, the wiry little tropic tramp, he could not know that he was chartering a boat-load of trouble. The captain was the sort of man of whom troubles steer clear, as an ordinary thing.

Opportunity was hanging over Dick Flynn and me down in Cartagena, Colombia, the night that we were shanghaied by Nels Larsen. It had to do with an expedition into the head-hunter jungle country; and to us it meant the big gambling chance of the year. It was the sort of long chance for fortune, fame, and adventure, all in a lump, that is always just around the bend of the wanderer's trail—except that this time we had caught up with it!

As you can imagine, we celebrated our Big Chance. And while we were celebrating, our luck left us. We were toasting fortune in a bright-lighted dance hall bar near the massive old Cartagena walls when Nels Larsen, big and burly, came prowling up to the bar with a nasty look in his eye.

Perhaps you have heard some of the stories about Nels Larsen in the days when he ran the *Cuttlefish*, that first little schooner of his. The *Cuttlefish* was manned with the meanest crew in the South American trade —and Nels Larsen kept them in hand. I have heard of mutiny under Larsen, when Nels knocked half of the crew out of commission with his two fists, made port in spite of them all, and sailed again with the same crazy crew!

Other stories of Nels Larsen are in the same strain. He would dive to knife a shark, or he would fight at the drop of a hat, with equal readiness. He was known as a hard man to buck, and a hard man to stop; a hard man.

Dick Flynn knew Larsen, and as the big captain came up to the bar I remember that we drank to him. The *Cuttlefish* was short handed at the time, and it was often hard for Larsen to get men. He looked us over without parleying; then he whispered to the bartender, and our fates were sealed. The next drink tasted funny.

A great drowsiness presently overcame us. I suppose we fell asleep in a corner of the bar—

SHANGHAIED. The *Cuttlefish*, with all sails set, drifted slowly over the blazing surface of the Caribbean with soft ripplings and plashings. Up from the hold a thick stench of fish-slime, rotten bananas, and the stale reek of a broken whisky cask came to mingle with the steamy tar-smell of the deck seams.

Against the capstan a muscular negro as black as a buzzard's wing lounged and leared, chewing green tobacco. A mixed-breed Portuguese, with a bloated, pock-marked face, sat cross-legged, weaving a long splice with a marlin-spike. A third seaman leaned his head on massive tattooed forearms and slept; the blotched skin of his face was half-covered with a grey stubble of beard. These were our mess-mates.

Dick Flynn, small and wiry, with a skin of tanned leather and the sharp eyes and features of a terrier, spat viciously over the rail and swore in three languages. The little schooner seemed hardly to move at all through the glaring heat of the doldrums; but that she moved we knew, for far astern, marking Cartagena and the opportunity Cartagena had meant to us, the great bulk of La Popa seemed slowly to fade and dissolve in the febrile shimmer of the heat waves.

The futile day wore on. Flynn sucked the habitual bulge of tobacco in his cheek and pondered malignantly, squinting his eyes in the glare that prevailed even under the awning tarp. There was no work to do. Larsen and his steersman remained abaft the cabin. Farther and farther away Flynn and I were drifting from our big chance.

Late in the afternoon Flynn turned to me with a sudden humorous gleam in his eyes. For several minutes he regarded me quizzically, then his face cracked into a grin.

"I don't know whether I can work it or not," he said, "but if I can it'll be good!"

"What will?"

"Don't know yet. Kind o' figgering how to get back to Cartagena real quick. Before the expedition starts out and loses us."

"You're crazy!"

"It *is* kind o' risky," Flynn reflected. Then, grinning again, "But it sure would be good! I think I know this guy Nels. Maybe not. But if I do——"

He chuckled softly.

"I don't know what you're hatching," I commented, "but whatever it is, lay off! It sounds batty to me."

Then Flynn fell silent, and I thought no more of it for a time.

That night Flynn got himself put on as night steersman, and for a moment I feared that he would try some such sure-death scheme as bringing the ship about during the night; but this only proved that I did not know Dick Flynn. You see, although Nels Larsen was a seaman, Flynn was another. Had I known what he really contemplated I would have *had* something to worry about.

Next morning La Popa was below the horizon and out of our lives. When Flynn found a chance he drew me aside. For a moment he let a malicious glee come into his eyes.

"I think I've got him," he whispered from the side of his mouth.

"Larsen?" I asked.

He nodded. I started to protest, for it seemed to me that Dick could only be raising trouble.

"Never you mind!" he stopped me. "Just watch."

He strolled away, squinting sharp eyes at the weather. "Change o' luck," he remarked. "We're going to have a capful."

FLYNN left me worried. What sun-struck form of suicide was the man about? For several hours after our talk nothing happened. Nothing except that a few light puffs of air presently began making catspaws on the water, backing Flynn's weather forecast. As it happened, one of those light air puffs gave the signal for the strange clash of wills that was about to take place.

It all happened so quickly that not a man on the ship, outside of Flynn and Larsen, in the least understood what was going on. Larsen, barefooted, was sitting in the stern near the wheel. Flynn was lounging and chewing tobacco amidships, at the starboard rail. Across the same rail, a storm-coat of Larsen's was slung out to dry.

Suddenly a puff of wind stronger than the rest carried the coat overboard.

A torrent of bellowed oaths burst from the captain. In an instant he was at the rail. At the dawdling pace of the schooner a quick man could dive after the coat, seize it, and catch a line in time to make the recovery without losing way. Larsen did things differently from other men.

"Cast a line!" he shouted as he stepped onto the rail.

But the captain did not dive. Flynn was running aft, shouting as he ran.

"Avast, Nels Larsen! Stop!"

Astonished by the yelled command, the captain obeyed.

"What now?" he demanded.

"Shark," Flynn explained tersely, his voice matter-of-fact.

He pointed over the rail. Yes, there was one of the knife-like black fins, broad on the starboard quarter, and dogging close.

"I'll learn you your business when I'm back aboard," Larsen raged. "Think I care for a —— —— shark!"

By this time the coat was well astern, but Larsen did not notice that now. His quarrel was with Flynn and the shark. He poised for the dive as Flynn yelled again.

"Avast, I tell you! *You haven't got it!*"

Larsen barely regained his balance in time. He felt for his sheath-knife, but it was at his belt. For a moment he stared at Flynn; then suddenly his hand went to the breast of his shirt, groped, and came away. Dick Flynn was shaking something gently in his closed fist, as a man warms dice. He returned the captain's stare with an open grin.

With a violent oath, Larsen started for the smaller man. Flynn did not move from his place, but quickly stretched the closed hand over the rail.

"*Cuidow!*" he snapped in Spanish dialect, his face suddenly hard.

The big seaman stopped in his tracks. Moments passed as the men faced each other, steel-eyed. The sails slatted in the increasing breeze, and the unmanned rudder slurred. Then Larsen ordered the staring crew forward. I would have stayed with Dick, but he nodded for me to go with the rest, and I went.

From the bow we could see the two men talking earnestly together, Dick Flynn always with the closed hand close to the rail. Fifteen minutes later, under Larsen's orders, we brought the ship about, and put back toward Cartagena!

That night the captain himself took Dick his supper, setting it down on the deck at a respectful distance. Flynn ate standing, that closed hand still resting lightly on the taffrail. And so he remained all night.

* * *

TAKING advantage of the sporadic puffs of wind, we made Cartagena the following day in the third watch. Nels Larsen's face had remained a mask, the purplish color of which he could not control. It was apparent to every man aboard that Flynn, not Larsen, was controlling the *Cuttlefish* now.

As soon as the schooner was brought to anchor Larsen, Flynn and I put ashore in the boat, Larsen sitting in the bow and Flynn in the stern sheets. As I rowed, Flynn talked.

"This Larsen," he remarked as if Nels were not just behind me, "is a good seaman—in his way. But ignorant. Real ignorant. That's why we're in this harbor now, instead of sailin' the Caribbean. Because Nels just happens to believe in shark charms."

"Shark charms?"

"Sure. You've heard of 'em. Supposed to keep off sharks, and the like. Here's Larsen's!"

I peered at the bright little object in Dick's extended palm. It seemed to be a small metal fish, about the size of a man's thumb.

"A porpoise," Flynn explained, "made of brass. He calls it a 'dolphin.' Nels told me all about it once, while some'at under the influence of alcoholic liquor. His father give it to him. And without this here brass dolphin, to keep off sharks, Larsen is scared to even board a ship!"

"Havin' swiped it from round his neck," Dick went on, "and got to where I could heave it overboard if he didn't act pretty, I had Nels scared silly. Didn't I, Nels?" Flynn grinned.

My back was turned to Larsen as I rowed, but I could imagine that the captain's face was gray with rage.

"Nels doesn't know," Dick added, pretending to lower his voice, "that over in Colon they sell hundreds of these here brass fish for souvenirs—at ten cents apiece!"

He chuckled gleefully as he looked past me at Larsen.

We neared the dock, and I swung the boat about, stern to the landing. Flynn made Larsen stay in his place until we had landed.

Carelessly, Dick tossed the brass amulet to Larsen.

Then a thing happened that threw a new light upon the whole affair, and showed us how blindly, foolishly dangerous Flynn's game had been.

"Watch me," said Larsen as he caught the dolphin. "Maybe you'll learn something."

Calmly, as we watched him, Nels Larsen twisted the tail of the brass dolphin. It unscrewed and came apart, and from its hollow interior Larsen extracted a little squill of twisted paper.

"See that?" he grinned. "That little bit of paper is worth more money, to the man that holds it, than you will ever see!"

Contemptuously Larsen tossed the empty trinket back to Flynn.

We watched him blankly as he rowed away.

"Well, anyway," said Flynn at last, "we're back in Cartagena!"

OUR MATE

by Harry Kemp

OH, OUR mate's a bull-necked blighter
An' we'd like to see him go
Where it's hotter than the tropics
In midday, at Callao.

He has no more fellow-feelin'
Than a bit o' weathered bone,
An' his fists strike hard as hammers,
An' his heart, it's worse than stone.

An' he drives us, drives us, drives us,
When there ain't no work to do—
An' there's not a man but hates him,
Sir, in all the bally crew.

Oh, he puts us holystonin',
Chippin' rust, an' daubin' paint
From the break o' day to moonrise,
An' we can't make no complaint:

Even Svenska Joe, the bully,
Drops his eyes when he stands near,
An' the Swiss that would of knifed him;
But the laws are too severe!

What, you say you know him, stranger;
An' you think the same as me? . . .
No, I don't make friends so easy—
Sorry; but we don't agree!
He's the best —— mate that ever
Cussed a lazy crew at sea!

PADDY MILES, FIGHTING MAN

by E. O. Foster

Author of "Scrambled Ducklings," "A Bit of a Sphit," etc.

Come get to your stable
All you that are able,
  And water your horses
  And give them some corn,
For if you don't do it
The colonel'll know it,
And then you will rue it
  As sure as you're born.

THE tired infantrymen who lay shivering in their thin blankets along San Pedro Ridge sprang to life in a flash at the call of the artillery bugle at the end of the camp. They belonged to the provisional brigade that had marched from Manila the night before, and after a month spent in the old Spanish *cuartels* were again in the field ready for another tour of hiking and fighting.

Already the cooks had great cans of steaming coffee waiting to wash down the sandwiches of coarse bread and corned "willy" lying in heaps on outstretched ponchos in front of the company fires. Below the ridge lay the town of San Pedro Macati, the Pasig river, like a silver ribbon, binding the edge of its principal street. In the distance the permanent camp of the Twelfth Infantry, its tents gleaming in the rays of the rising sun, cut sharply against the sky line.

The ravenous soldiers downed the sandwiches, gulped the steaming coffee and began to roll blankets and shelter-halves. It was a dry camp, the water for the coffee being packed from the river late the night before.

In the short interval before starting time the wits of the "A" Company began their usual morning drive on old Paddy Miles, the company cook. Paddy's real name was Peter Himmelhaver and he had more years of army service to his credit than the majority of the company had months.

Pug Carroll began the ragging, shouting in a singsong voice:

"Old Paddy Miles is a fighting man,
Fights for the dollars whenever he can,
Then buys booze and gets in a jam,
  But ——"

Pug dodged the billet of wood flung from Paddy's hand. It whizzed past his ear, landing *ker-plunk* on the tightly stretched trousers of the regimental sergeant-major who was bending over his haversack. As if by magic, Company A, yelling and roaring a moment before, was silent as a tomb; but oh! how that pursy, puffed up non-com. did rave, and rave as he would, it was all to no purpose.

No one would "peach," and Old Paddy bending over his kettles and pans, was not an object to draw suspicion. The sergeant-major probably would have been howling yet had it not been for "Assembly" sounding at that moment.

Five minutes later the brigade was under way, Old Paddy harrying his two Chinese helpers, loaded to the last ounce with the cooking kits, into the column just back of Captain Pott's light battery, and when "A" Company, which was acting as rear-guard, swung into the column just behind the battery, Old Paddy was perched on the rear of the ammunition wagon, wedged in between his sacks of culinary implements. The chinks, relieved of their burdens for the moment, trudged happily along in the dust just out of range of Paddy's heels.

As the column turned into the river road, the men, already thirsty, cast longing eyes at the water dancing in the sunlight, but the order had gone forth from the medical staff at Manila that only water that was boiled could be used for drinking purposes, and the old disciplinarian that rode at the head of the column had warned his officers against letting the men fall out.

Now, Old Paddy knew a trick or two about campaigning. He had fought under Crook, and Miles, on the plains and in the waterless deserts of Arizona. He knew what the sun could do. He knew what thirst was, and did not intend to suffer needlessly with water in sight.

Just as the head of the column left the road to work up the draw that led toward the scene of proposed operations, he slipped from his perch, clutching wildly at his sacks, and fell, the camp kit cascading over him. The chinks began a wild scramble to salvage the mess, Old Paddy working like a demon to clear the road for "A", but he was too slow, and the company had to make a "right oblique" to go around the scattered pans, the rattled chinks, and grinning Paddy.

"Get your worthless old carcass out of the way!"

The words struck Old Paddy's ears like the roar of the Bull of Bashan. He knew who it was that had reined in, and was looking down at him, and wily Old Paddy, with a last tremendous tug, rolled out of the way. He did not even look up, but busied himself with the tangled mess until the general clattered away toward the head of the column.

It took but a minute to dash down to the water's edge, fill his and Pug's canteens and dip two pails of water from the river.

When the column halted a short distance farther on Paddy came up, a bucket of water in each hand, the Chinaman staggering under the added weight of a bucket of water suspended at each end of their *pingas* or carrying-poles. The officers had gone up ahead for the final conference before the brigade debouched on the plain above, and when they returned each of the fifty men in "A" Company had a quart of water safely stowed in his canteen.

He always thought of "der poys" first, himself last. It was always like this with Paddy; and if one of them tried to thank him for an act of kindness all he got for his pains was a string of curses in broken English, with a few Hebrew and German expletives thrown in for good measure.

Now, Old Paddy had two obsessions.

The first and greatest was to have a real "bunkie," a chum like Jack Flynn whom he had lost in his younger days, clipped through the throat in battle by an Apache bullet. Most of the men in "A" were younger, and the few old-timers, non-coms. all, felt a bit too proud to associate with the Old German Jew. For some time he had been slyly making up to Pug Carrol, a raw young Irishman who had joined the company the year before.

Pug looked and acted just like Jack Flynn, and sometimes Pug's good-natured joshing would set Old Paddy's heart-strings to twitching. The funny thing about it was that Pug liked Paddy, and was ashamed to show it, and being ashamed, bedeviled the old man to the limit.

Paddy's second obsession was exactly similar to Pug's one and only ambition; he wanted to be a non-com.; and in all his twenty-five years of soldiering he had never even reached the grade of lance corporal. He was ugly, skinny, round shouldered, uneducated. He knew it, and he knew he had no chance, good soldier though he was, But he always hoped for the impossible, the one chance that would bring him the chevrons.

Pug, tickled to death at the trick the old man had played, reached for Paddy's pocket.

"Gee, you're a —— of a fella. Why didn't you throw all that tinware away, tie up the legs of those old canvas trousers of yours and bring us all a real drink? Gimme a chew, you old sheeney!"

Pug winked slowly at Paddy as he bit a big hunk off Paddy's plug and stuck the rest in his pocket.

"Shiminy Moses, vot is? That —— —— Pug, he smokes my smokes tobacco; he shews my shews tobacco; he calls me a sheeney."

Old Paddy twisted his wrinkled face into an imitation of a hired mourner at a Jewish funeral, scooped a handful of dust from the road and began to cast it over his head.

"Sashcloth mitt ashes by you, you *schweinhund* of an Irisher."

The roar that went up at this exchange of pleasantries was cut short by the captain's command—

"Fall in."

"A" again took up the march, deploying as skirmishers to cover the rear of the column already taking position at the top of the draw.

THERE was no officer in all that brigade who took a clearer or more comprehensive view of the terrane in front of him than did Old Paddy. Age had not dimmed his sight, and his leathery muscles were still all to the good.

He saw a pretty field of operations, the insurgents lying in their trenches on a ridge to the left, the tents of the Twelfth shining like stones in a cemetery on another ridge to the right. In the center lay a long valley, widening in the distance to where its foot touched the waters of Manila Bay. In the near foreground rose a tall mango tree, its wide-flung branches rising like a pyramid over the deep lush grass. In the distance a small rocky hill rose in the center of the plain.

Already the commander of the first regiment was deploying his companies as skirmishers to take the front line of attack. Then in response to a command from the signal man on the general's staff, "A" company began to move forward at double time, Old Paddy and his chinks clattering along in the rear.

The sun had risen toward its meridian and was already scorching the backs of Company "A," but in they went, advancing by rushes, taking advantage of all shelter and keeping their proper place in the rear of their regiment. An occasional bullet dropped near them. Old Paddy tore along, driving his chinks to the utmost.

He knew what generally happened to stragglers in the Philippines, and had no desire to be strapped out on an ant-heap until his bones were picked clean as a hound's tooth. He'd keep up all right, and when the outfit settled down to real fighting he'd show 'em a thing or two, and maybe get a lance corporal's stripe after the thing was over. This day dream was ended by a smashing blow on the left arm that turned him half around. A .45 Remington had drilled through it.

He glanced at the blood streaming down his wrist, yelled to the chinks to keep up with the company, then sat down and opened his "first aid" package. When he had finished dressing his wound the brigade was stretched out along the foot of the slope, throwing volley after volley toward the insurgent trenches above them.

Already he could see the first of the wounded men, the "walking" cases, coming down the slope. He began to figure how he could aid them, and again the "clip" of a bullet as it cut the grass near him broke in on his thoughts. It came from near by.

A sniper, evidently, overlooked in the advance, had his range. He dodged into a near-by coulée and worked to the shelter of a clump of cogon grass, its plumes waving in the sun like the spears of a Zulu *impi*.

He rested a few minutes, reviewing his chances. He could see the top of the rocky hill in the center of the plain and was surprized that it was so near. This was a place of refuge and if the fringe of small brush around its top told no lie it concealed a depression that probably still held the water deposited by the rains of the month before.

He tightened the bandage on his arm, slipped from the cogon grass, and ran in a zig-zag toward the hill. He gained the summit and dropped out of sight in the small brush that lined a deep, mud-scummed depression in its center.

Paddy's throat was parched, but he would not drink the water from his canteen. He knew how precious it would be if he had to remain for any length of time exposed to the rays of the tropical sun. Instead he worked his way down to the slimy basin and swept the scum to one side.

Underneath it lay a pool of dirty water, reeking with animalculæ. He spread his handkerchief, tied his tin cup in it and held it beneath the surface until the cup was full, wetting his lips before he placed it carefully at the edge of the pool and worked his way up to an observation point.

In the distance a group of wounded men were coming down the slope over which the brigade had passed a few minutes before. Already they skulked along, seeking the shelter of bush and tree, trying to dodge the bullets of the insurgent snipers.

Two of the men were carrying a stretcher. He could just distinguish the brassards on their arms that marked them as litter bearers. He gazed intently trying to locate the direction of fire against them by the spurts of clod that marked the spot where the bullets struck. He thought he had it. At the upper end of the plain stood the mango tree, sturdy, heavily leaved. He leaned his rifle over a rock and raised his sights. His left arm was already stiffening, but he snuggled the butt of his Krag close to his shoulder, easing the trigger firmly and gently to a hair edge, got a bead on the center of the tree and fired.

He could see a small branch, evidently clipped at its stem, winnow slowly to the ground. He had the range and was just preparing for another shot when the *ping* of a Mauser bullet as it hit the rock below him changed his plans. It evidently came from a coulée in front of him that led down from the ridge.

He worked a little higher and raised his campaign hat about six inches above him. The ruse succeeded and the impact of three bullets below him gave him an idea of the number of men in the coulée. Again he turned his attention to the distant mango and let drive, aiming a bit to the left of his first shot. The only answer was a volley that fell around the wounded men, who had halted, evidently in a panic.

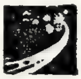
Again the *smash, smash, smash,* of the bullets against the rock, one of them richocheting over his head. The reports from the coulée sounded nearer. The wounded men were nearing the cogon grass that Paddy had just left, within hailing distance. He called to them to make for the rock, but they were unwilling to take a chance, and hid in the grass. One of them stood up and yelled back at him. He could not distinguish the words but he recognized Pug, and saw him clutch at his shoulder and fall. The rattle of the rifles from the mango reached his ears.

Paddy began to worry. If Pug was there, it was a cinch that others of "der poys" were in the bunch. Well, it was up to Old Paddy again. He switched his rifle, drew a bead on a small bunch of bushes in the coulée ahead of him, and fired, working out his magazine as fast as he could. That would keep his three snipers down for a moment. Then he slipped over the opposite side of the rock, and belly close to the ground, crawled till he reached the clump of cogon.

Pug was sitting up trying to improvise a bandage for his shoulder. One of the litter-bearers was dead, the other a raw recruit, in a state of blue funk. Three of the other men who belonged to "A" company had slight wounds, but were able to walk, were still able to use the rifles that they carried hung by slings over their shoulders.

Already the bullets were cutting through the grass. If he was to get his comrades into the comparatively safe shelter of the rock it was time to act. Old Paddy rose, unmindful of the sniper's fire, his shoulders just clearing the cogon. He stepped over to Pug and with a "Gimme a shew, Irisher," deftly extracted the plug from the pocket of his wounded comrade's blue shirt, bit off a huge chew, tucked it back in his own jeans, cajoled one of "A's" men to take the place of the dead litter-bearer, and with Pug in the lead herded the little detachment out of the cogon.

With them well on the way he danced up and down waving defiance and making unprintable gestures in the direction of the insurgents hidden in the mango. That drew their fire and before they could reload he ran to the foot of the hill and repeated his actions, facing the coulée, before he began the short ascent. Half-way up in the shelter of a jagged boulder, he found one of the men lying in a heap, the bloody froth on his lips telling of a fatal wound. Old Paddy left his canteen beside him, took his comrade's cartridge-belt and rifle and scrambled over the crest, the insurgent bullets *peck, peck, pecking* at his heels.



PUG already had stationed three of the men at intervals around the edge of the hill. One of the litter-bearers was a poor shot, but he was better than none, and in a pinch would probably do good work at close quarters. Paddy joined Pug on the side toward the coulée.

In the distance the pair could see the brigade advancing for the final attack on the trenches, "A" company moving up in support of the left flank. Then Paddy worked over to the side nearest the mango just in time to see a half dozen insurgents piling down from it ready to join with the men in the coulée in an attack on his little party. He shouted to Carrol who, unable to hold a gun to his shoulder, was loading the rifles of the men who were unable to fight and passing them to the lookouts. Soon the Krags began to bark defiance at the snipers.

Paddy was just drawing a bead on the foremost of the insurgents when in the distance he espied a regiment of native infantry break from the cover on the west in a threatened attack on the exposed flank of his regiment.

They would be hidden until within a hundred yards of the brigade.

The old soldier had been ready to fight it out with the snipers, no matter what the odds, trusting to his knowledge of the game to pull through somehow, but when he saw the danger that threatened the brigade he threw all thought of danger to the winds and tying his big bandana handkerchief to the ramrod of his Krag he stood up on the highest part of the hill, faced in the direction of the brigade and began wigwagging.

Bullets began to whistle closer and closer around him, but he kept steadily at his task. Pug glanced up, saw the old man standing there, and yelled to him. All he got was—

"—— Irisher."

Just then a bullet hit Paddy in the leg, and a stream of blood began trickling down it like a rivulet, spurting out through the laces of his leggings.

Pug sprang to the side of Old Paddy, placing his good shoulder under Paddy's arm-pit and the crippled pair that made up one good man kept the flag going. It seemed an age before one of the regimental signalmen caught the waving flag, and an eternity before Old Paddy, whose signalling always was on the phonetic order, got his message over to them.

As a matter of fact the whole performance lasted less than two minutes, but in that two minutes the insurgents had drawn closer and closer to the rock. With the answering "O.K." Paddy slumped, and Pug half carried, half dragged him into the shelter of the basin. Yelling to the other men that it was better to die fighting than by an insurgent bolo, Pug stripped Paddy's leg, improvised a tourniquet from his belt and twisted it tight above the wound until the artery ceased its fretful pulsing. Then he loaded Paddy's rifle and worked his way along the crest, exchanging guns with the different men.

Old Paddy was down and it was up to him, Pug Carrol, almost a recruit, to hold the fort. Well, by ——, he'd hold it. In the distance he could see the brigade hastily reforming. The three insurgents from the coulée had gone down, picked off one by one in their rush forward, but the men from the mango were close at hand. As he began to count them, one fell. There was still a chance. Then he saw, in the near foreground, another bunch of insurgents, probably twenty, that had gathered from various hiding-places, approaching the rock from a different angle. The jig was up.

Resolved to die fighting, Pug grabbed a rifle, laid it over a rock and aiming at the nearest of the new party, fired. The shock of the recoil tore the bandage from his shoulder. It felt like the kick of an elephant. Tears came to his eyes, but when he wiped them away he saw that he had got his man. The sharp "plug" of a bullet that tore through the heart of the man behind him told of another angle of the rock left exposed. Again he fired, this time at the leader of the smaller party. He made a clean miss.

Things began to look indistinct. A mist clouded his eyes. As he dropped slowly into oblivion the scream of an approaching shell tore across his consciousness. He tried to cheer. Good Old Ramsay Potts was coming to the rescue by the quickest route, the air line, which a three-point-two shell filled with shrapnel, was traversing at the rate of 1200 feet a second. He knew that everything was all right and dropped off. He did not hear the second shot, nor the third, but the insurgents, those that escaped the first shell, did.

The brigade cleaned up the attacking regiment in jig time, drove the insurgents helter-skelter from their trenches, and then sent a company back to mop up the field. "A" Company clamored to go. And the brigade commander who had saved the day because Old Paddy had risked his "worthless old carcass" for the honor of the army in general, and the brigade in particular, gave the order, adding as he sat tapping the heel of his boot with his saber—

"Captain, find the man that sent that message, and I'll see that he is promoted."

Company "A" headed straight for the rock, took care of its dead and wounded, sending them to the Twelfth's hospital, and then mopped up—mopped up so thoroughly that the insurgents spoke of the process for years after with bated breath. It was only four hours from the time Old Paddy first sought shelter in the rocks until he was lying in a clean bed, watching the doctor as he bent over Pug, who lay unconscious in the next cot.

Pug stirred uneasily at the prick of the probe, moved his hands feebly in futile effort to push the doctor's hand away, and began to sing, or rather breathe, in a deep undertone, the doggerel he had chanted so merrily that morning. He sang it through from beginning to end, Old Paddy pricking his ears to catch every word of it, but this time, instead of the usual ribald ending came the words stronger, clearer—

But—he never goes back *on a "bunkie."*

Old Paddy, his eyes glistening, heaved a deep sigh, worked his grizzled, care-seamed face deeper into his pillow, and began figuring just how he could give Pug, *his* "bunkie," all the credit.

THE FIRST WESTERN SHERIFF

by Frank H. Huston

A TYPICAL character of the old West, was "Old Joe" Meek, hunter, trapper, explorer; rough and illiterate; and, as he said of himself, "a —— roarin' boozer," but American to the core.

He had been with Smith, Jackson and Sublet as an "engagé," and one time while with the latter on a trip to found a new trapping station, saw a couple of peaceful Indians approaching the camp where the outfit had laid over for a few days. Raising his rifle he dropped one of the aborigines in his tracks. The other immediately took to his heels and escaped before Joe could reload. Sublet was angry at the wanton act, calling Joe to account for killing the poor wretch; asking what in —— he meant by it.

"Why, —— it all, he was robbing traps. Ain't it mountain law to kill a man robbing traps?" asked Meek.

"Robbing traps?" said Sublet. "Why, there isn't a trap set out within three hundred miles of here."

"Well anyway," grinned the genial old scoundrel, "he looked like he was a going to, so it's all the same."

He was with Smith in California, and later with Frémont. He left the latter after the massacre of the Indians on the Umpqua by the so-called Pathfinder and, going to the Oregon country, identified himself with the early settlers.

In 1853 the settlers met at Champoeg on the Wallamat and organized a provincial government.

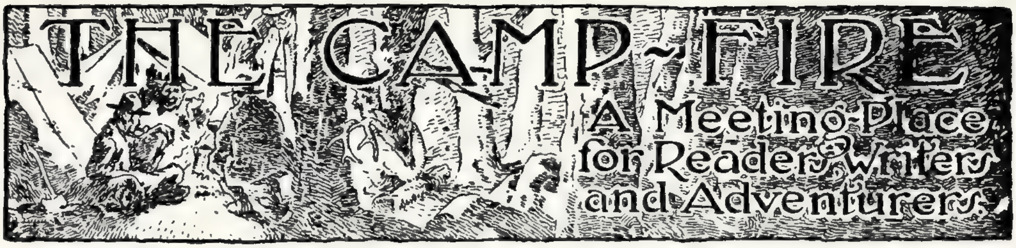
This step was forced upon them by the machinations of the Hudson's Bay Company who wished to keep settlers, especially Americans, out of the country; and by the dealings of the French and Belgian Jesuits, and of the Methodist Board of Missions, with the natives. Incidentally Dr. Whitman, of whose influence the Jesuits were jealous, saved the whole Northwest to the American people, by rushing across the continent and placing the truth before President Tyler.

At this first meeting of the settlers the Rev. Father Blanchet represented the Hudson's Bay Company, and Le Breton the Americans. Joe Meek played a very prominent part; calling for a division and—

"Cheers fer our side, and be —— to you."

In consequence, and partly because of his reputation, he was elected sheriff. This office he filled with credit to himself and his people, albeit in a somewhat informal and amusing manner, his crudities of speech, original mode of enforcing and interpreting law, having become historic and rank with the individual who established and dispensed "law West of the Pecos." Joe, however, antedates this latter by decades.

So to Meek goes the honor of being the first American peace officer west of the Rockies, as well as the first of that long and not always glorious list of "shotgun sheriffs" who made history, American History, in the West.


THE CAMP-FIRE
A Meeting-Place for Readers Writers and Adventurers

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

A FEW words from Talbot Mundy in connection with his complete novel in this issue. There has been quite a little outside testimony, from people qualified to know, that Mr. Mundy has in these *Jimgrim* stories set forth faithfully a very remarkable knowledge of the inside of things that have been happening in Palestine and Arabia these past few years. Certainly he had, during the greater part of a year, most exceptional advantages and opportunities for finding out what lay beneath the surface.

I have avoided the charge of propaganda, which is leveled nowadays at every one who puts a thread of truth into a story, by refraining from writing this one until long after the event. Feisul has come into his own; he is in Baghdad at this writing, with the offer in his pocket of the Kingdom of Mesopotamia, and the Arabs are busy electing him with no other contestant in the field.

THE description of Feisul is drawn at first hand. He is like good wine that needs no bush; you can't say enough in his praise, or overdraw the man's impressive manliness, any more than you can overstate the meanness of the method used to get rid of him.

I refuse to say how much of this story is true. Treat it as fiction, and let it go at that; it happens to amuse me to take drab facts and weave a story out of them, and I don't know that they're worse material than whole-cloth inventions would be. But if you're still curious, I'll admit this: I was in Damascus while Feisul was playing that losing hand, and I had the whole story from his own lips of the Arab share in the great war, of the Allies' promises, and of how they had been broken after the armistice, when Arab friendship didn't look quite so necessary as it did when the promises were given. We talked for hours, but he never once complained on his own account. He is an Arab patriot first and last, with no other aim than to see his nation self-determined and ruled by a government of their own choosing.

THERE are one or two points made in the story that admit of no contradiction. For instance, Feisul did escape with a handful of loyalists to British territory. He went to Haifa, thence to Egypt, thence to Italy, and finally to London, where he did exactly as *Jimgrim* had advised him, making the acquaintance of the right people, avoiding politicians, and biding his time.

All the names in the story other than Feisul's and that of Colonel Lawrence are absolutely fictitious. I have Feisul's permission to use his. Colonel Lawrence only comes in by unauthorized deputy. It isn't I who took his illustrious name in vain, but the thousand and one rumor-mongers who were busy in Damascus at that time. You heard on every hand that Lawrence was back in Damascus in disguise, although there wasn't a word of truth in it. *Hadad* is alive and kicking. So is *Jeremy*. So are *Jimgrim* and *Narayan Singh*. You'll hear from *Ramsden* and the last three down in Egypt presently, in a tale called "A Secret Society," which is also founded on unquestionable fact that would be questioned, nevertheless, if told as truth. Truth seems to be a mighty dangerous lady, unless you smuggle her past the censor with her skirts below the knee and lots of powder on her nose.—TALBOT MUNDY.

HAVE you ever killed game with a bow and arrow? Have you ever even thought about it since you were a kid? Would you consider it child's sport to face a charging grizzly and bring him down at twenty yards with a bow and arrow?

Waban, Massachusetts.

Somewhat diffidently I butt in with a suggestion to all open-minded Venturers: and first, a gentle hint as to what class of you it should appeal. Lately I met up with a young aviation captain. He had three years service in France, was in four big fights, and in his fifth was shot down and made a three-months' prisoner in Germany till the armistice. Now, on "days off" he was shooting jackrabbits in Oklahoma, going miles out from the post in a flivver, averaging one jack to fifteen shots, and says it was fun alive!

Why? Because, instead of aiming at them over in the next Oklahoma county with a telescopic cannon, he used a six-foot longbow, with arrows made by himself. As he wrote that he used a seventy-five lb. bow—pulling weight, understand—I expected to see a six-foot, two-hundred lb. man; whereas he was a straight, slim, five-foot eight—for a guess—one hundred and sixty pounder, with the face of the quiet man whom you'd like at your side in a hot corner.

ALSO: being off-season, deer-killing could not be had. But just to see how they'd stand fire from the silent weapon he stalked three bucks to some sixty yards and in each case sent three shafts whistling past their ears before they moved. Having a blunt arrow with him, he stalked another, let drive with the bow short-drawn, so as not to hurt him, and plumped that shaft neatly in behind the shoulder. A sharp 'un with that bow full-drawn would have gone clear through. The buck hopped, scooted some fifty yards, then stopped and turned round to see what under the canopy it was all about.

Last Summer I met another man, Dr. Pope of San Francisco, who brought east with him a seventy-five lb. hunting-bow of Oregon yew, and a sheaf of heavy arrows that he used in real hunting, with triangular knife-edged heads as broad as a quarter-dollar (for a guess). With a single one of those at some twenty yards he stopped—and dropped—a one-thousand-pound male grizzly bear in full charge. You men of the pocket howitzer and the cordite, is that red-blooded enough for you? As for me, I couldn't even draw a bow like that; forty pounds is good enough for me. But one of our Easterners, Dr. O. L. Hertig of Pittsburg, Pa., picked it up, looked it over casually, fitted one of the big arrows to the string and let drive at a thick straw target—and cut a neat knife-hole through its very center. I paced the distance then. It was sixty-eight yards.

NOW then: why don't some of you who can't go to South Africa or up the Amazon do the next best thing and join our U. S. A. archer gang of a thousand or so? Make lots of misses, give the game a chance to live and be shot at again, and remember that to watch the flight of your arrow for one hundred yards or so to an almost-hit is five or six long seconds of keen joy. The chances are you'll get another chance, and a real hit is a thing worth yelling about. If you have to live a hundred miles from game, what then? Why, a forty-yard range in your back yard, with a sail back-stop, will give you heaps of fun, and a husky exercise that will keep you toned up for business of almost any sort—including the laying-out of any hold-up man who lets you get within arm's length of him.

This is Winter and the wind is howling snow-wraiths past the window. I'm cutting white-goose feathers for fifty arrows for next Spring—which is a right interesting stunt—and making glue-laid bow-strings better than can be bought. One of them, one-sixteenth of an inch thick, of twenty-four shoe threads, easily holds up a one-hundred-and-fifty-pound man, and last year I shot a twenty-one thread well over four thousand five hundred times before it broke.

By the way, what do your cartridges cost this year? Arrows may be used a hundred times, and then some. I have just refeathered a lot of ten-year veterans, now as good as new. If we had room I could tell you all about it. Well—not all, by a long shot; but I could talk a lot.

Give a rest to the "cattridge" and the long-tom. Be a boy again and hark to the whisp of the flying arrow!

I'm constantly surprized to find men and women with the old atavistic hunting-spirit off in some quiet over-settled section a-working it out of their system with the longbow. One lot of three ex-service men had been shooting round here for a year and didn't even know of our Greater-Boston club; so there were lots of fine points that they were missing, and next year they'll put in keen practise.—JOHN PRESTON TRUE.

SOMETHING from Clyde B. Hough concerning his story in this issue:

Oakland, California.

We have all heard of and some of us have come in contact with the fellow who under normal conditions will fight at the drop of your hat, but who turns his back, fear-stricken, and runs when placed on the firing-line. I have thought much about this type and I believe that he is, in the final analysis, a coward. I have not used such a character in "The Spirit of the Flames" because he would have made the story too complicated. I have, however, made use of his opposite, the man who can not be drawn into single-handed combat, but who, when placed on the firing-line, becomes a veritable demon. I believe that this type of man is truly brave, that his failure to fight the smaller battles is due to the fact that it requires something big, some tremendous excitement or urge, to arouse him. Such a character, I have endeavored to portray in the man called *Kelp*. *Kelp* is a fictitious character. All that he is credited with having done is imaginary. Likewise "*Red*" *Donnelly*, the prop, and all his doings are fictitious.

The rest of the story, that which deals with the earthquake and fire in San Francisco, is cold fact. In detail it is absolutely true. The description is modified for obvious reasons. Otherwise, no liberties or license whatsoever have been taken.—C. B. Hough.

IN REPLY to letters to me some of you have already been hearing from some one else on the staff instead, with the following statement enclosed:

> Because it has become a physical impossibility for me to answer personally and fully the thousands of letters addressed to me, others of the staff have had to join in answering them. I do not like this, but it can not be helped. When a man speaks to me by letter I want to speak back to him myself, but there is a limit to what one man can do in trying to talk with thousands. It's taken a long time to convince me that "can't" means "can't," but in the end had to be convinced.
>
> I still answer personally as many as I can. There is no personal discrimination in dividing the letters between the others and me—the letters are divided arbitrarily before they come to any of us.
>
> My one comfort in this matter is that the others of our staff have toward you the same friendly spirit, are just as interested as I in your suggestions and criticisms, and just as appreciative of your kind words and spirit of good comradeship. We all want your letters, and among us we'll do our best to answer them satisfactorily. And I know you don't ask any man to do more than he can.
>
> (Signed A. S. H.)

That's all true, and yet you'll not quite believe the wrench this change has cost me. Many a one of you I've known for nearly a dozen years and it makes me squirm to think of your speaking to me by letter, as so often before, and this time getting no reply from me except the above. Many newer friends are just as much friends. If one of you spoke to me on the street would I fail to speak back? Yet I am no longer *able* to speak back to all of you by letter. That's that, and I can't dodge it.

But I can kick like ——. I've worked on half a dozen other magazines and I never could have stood a dozen years on any of them or any other, even including this one, without the human touch, human interest and human friendliness that have grown up about this one. You haven't been just readers—you've been co-workers; your ideas, your interest and your help have done what we in the office certainly could not have done alone. *Adventure* began as just a fiction magazine; between us we've made it an institution, a service bureau, the connecting link that has united us into a very real comradeship. To the newer readers this will sound like bunk; the older readers will know that it is not. And now it's got to the stage where I have to act "haughty" and get other people to reply for me when one of you speaks to me! Or at least it will seem that way.

TO MAKE it worse, I've always *asked* for your letters. For years I've been telling you how much we in the office want your comments, criticisms and votes. I've never definitely asked right out for your friendship, but I guess I've made it pretty plain that I want it. To make it still worse, I still ask for your letters, your comments and criticisms, and—why make any bones about it?—your friendship. And on top of all that, I can't answer all your letters personally when I get them!

Instead, I have to ask still more from your friendliness, draw still more on your help. Will you come across one more time—will you just keep it firmly and everlastingly in your minds that, even if I'm forced to answer you sometimes through some one else and with only a formal greeting of my own, I'm just the same fellow as before? Of course some of you don't give a hang whether I answer personally or not, but some of you do. And I do.

THERE are, luckily, gains in the new arrangement. Most of all, you'll get better acquainted with the others here in the office. Among them Noyes, Cox and Barretto have been with us for years and already have many acquaintances and friends among you, particularly Noyes through "Ask Adventure" and Cox through our Stations. All of us in the office are good friends among ourselves and you'll find them, as I have, good fellows who're worth knowing. All of us have our faults, but—well, if any one gets on the staff with a crust on him or a tendency to snobbishness, we promptly get out one of two things—the ax or the hook.

Another gain cames through specialization. Already all "A. A." mail goes directly or indirectly to Noyes, Station mail to Cox.

As we get the new arrangement under way there'll be further specialization. For example, all letters of praise, criticism and suggestion will probably go to Barretto for final answer. He has a better memory than I and, his mind not being so filled with other correspondence matters, will be better able to get a clearer and more definite grasp of the sum total of these comments and their general drift on specific points. If necessary, he'll keep records or comments, thus gaining an informal but definite vote from you on hundreds of matters pertaining to the magazine. Hitherto I've had to trust my harassed memory to get the general drift of your comments on stories, authors, headings, covers, departments and everything else. Through him I—and all of us—can get the majority verdict more definitely and surely. He'll answer them, but be sure all of us will digest them. And of course, even in answering he'll have me in on some of them.

There will be other similar gains from specialization. Indeed, when I think over the change honestly, it's only I myself who am the heavy loser, so I guess it's up to me not to howl any longer about it.

BECAUSE the following insists upon taking more space than it should, the usual distinction between large and small type is dropped and all that follows is printed in small type:

A YEAR or so ago Everett P. Milstead, writing from U. S. S. *New York*, San Francisco, California, objected bitterly to the use, by several of our writers in their stories, of such expressions as "like a drunken sailor." He wrote me that, in effect, it was an insult to the Navy, that it was unjust, that he was crusading against its use by any one, had made several famous men (naming them) apologize for having used it. I replied in effect, that we had meant no harm, were strong for the Navy, had many friends in it, etc., but that the expression was one in common use, had come down from past generations, that some sailors, like most other people, got drunk, and that I could see no reason why we should either apologize or cut out the expression if it happened to occur in one of our stories. I think I also told him he was making a mountain out of a mole-hill.

My reply didn't satisfy him and he challenged me to present his case to Camp-Fire. I did so, printing one or both of his letters and my letter to him. Then the replies began to come in from you. Quite a lot of them. I've never printed them, for there wasn't space enough for all, it seemed a crime to cut most of them and give just their general drift, and I confess the work attached to the job of presenting that little pile of letters made me put it off. No, Mr. Milstead, I didn't suppress them because Camp-Fire's vote backed you up and I wasn't willing to admit it. Quite the opposite.

In fact, if I printed all those letters in full, Mr. Milstead would get therefrom such a lambasting as Camp-Fire has never given any other human being.

I THINK we can take space enough to give in full everything in those letters that upholds Mr. Milstead's side of the case and still have room for enough bits from the great mass of contrary opinion to make it plain that Camp-Fire's verdict is overwhelmingly against him. And you will note that in most cases the comrades who speak are, or have been, sailors themselves. He has got more than a fair trial, for most of the jury are of those whom he believes suffer so great an injury from the use of the expression in question. Also, he asked for that trial and he himself chose the jury.

IF MR. MILSTEAD hatches the idea that I have in any way suppressed any evidence in his favor, I meet his suspicion in advance by hereby asking any one who wrote in Mr. Milstead's favor and had his testimony suppressed or doctored to notify Mr. Milstead at once. If his address given above (the only one I have) no longer reaches him, address him in care *Our Navy*, 81 Sands St., Brooklyn, N. Y. If that publication is unable to reach him by mail, it will, I am sure, if you give it permission to see your letter to Mr. Milstead, take up the cudgels in his behalf, for it too is engaged in a crusade against the use of such expressions as "like a drunken sailor."

After Camp-Fire had registered its opinion I received the following on the stationery of *Our Navy*, with its San Francisco address given as 320 Market St., and its New York or Brooklyn address as above. I omit the Senator's name.

January 10, 1922.

"The enclosed letter is self-explanatory.

Ever since Senator —— resurrected his remark about 'Drunken Sailors' the same remark has been made by men high in public and literary life, and we realize fully that when this phrase is used, no reflection on the uniform of the United States Navy is intended.

However, unintentional as it may be, to the civilian layman this phrase brings a mental picture of a 'Man-o'-War's Man' intoxicated. Even if this opinion is subconsciously formed, the reflection on the uniform is there and the Navy men very much resent this phrase."—*Our Navy*, R. C. SHEPHERD, General Manager.

THE following is their enclosed letter, giving, as you see, a Washington address not given on *Our Navy's* letter-head as received by me. Its own letter-head gives its writer's address and his title of lieutenant. I do not give his address, but it can probably be given by *Our Navy* if any one wishes it. Its writer, like *Our Navy*, is also protesting against the phrase "drunken sailor," but personally I much prefer their method of stating their case as compared to Mr. Milstead's.

January 4, 1922.

"*Our Navy*, 618 Bond Building, Washington, D. C.

Gentlemen:—I note some more of the terms that are so common in magazines and papers, and wonder if *Our Navy* can find time to call their attention to it.

In *Adventure* for January 30th, 1922, in a story entitled 'The Men of the Night,' on page 125, appears 'It paid well. The drunken sailor is a piker by the side of a crook with coin;' and on page 136 is 'Red the Gob, ex-sailor and strong-arm worker.' "—F. V. GREENE.

THE objection to speaking in a fiction story of any ex-sailor as a strong-arm worker is equivalent to maintaining that no ex-sailor was ever a strong-arm worker, for, if any ex-sailor ever was such, the author of the story has sufficient foundation of fact to warrant his words. If Mr. Greene's point is merely that no fiction should picture any sailor or ex-sailor as anything not respectable—well, Mr. Greene, why not? Should sailors be nursed and favored beyond all other classes of people, or do you feel that fiction should not contain any characters, sailors or otherwise, who are not eminently respectable? Is it special privilege or Pollyanna that you want? Mr. Greene may belong in with the folk who object when a Swede, Dutchman, or some other representative of a foreign nation or of some particular religious faith happens to be the villain of a fiction story. Their point of view reduces to this: "(1) We don't object when you label a villain as belonging to any race or religion other than our own, but if you label him with *our* race or religion, we will protest bitterly. (2) When you depict one representative of a race or religion as bad, you thereby charge all representatives of it with being bad and are attacking that race or religion itself." We implore all such folk to get an elementary text-book on logic and study the part on fallacious reasoning.

YOU may think I give a vast amount of space to this "drunken-sailor" matter. I admit that, in itself, it does not warrant the space. But there is involved here something a million times bigger and a million times more important than Mr. Milstead and Mr. Greene and *Our Navy* and any others there may be who crusade in similar fashion. Here is one more example of the dangerous, undemocratic, damnable craze for dictating to other people what they must or must not say, write, feel, do; another example of class gain being allowed to override all consideration for the equal rights of others; another tiny step in the insidious, widespreading march against freedom of speech, thought and action.

If the best Mr. Milstead, Mr. Greene and *Our Navy* can do toward the job of setting the world aright is to waste their time and other people's in fighting over a figure of speech that usage if nothing else has made a recognized part of every-day speech, they deserve pity and the world had best look elsewhere for help in the thousand really vital problems with which it has to grapple.

OH, WELL, I'll give them a full hearing, even though I know most of you don't want to hear them. Learning that *Our Navy* was in the crusade, I wrote them for their side of the case. Heaven knows I don't want to insult the men of our Navy or any other sailormen, so, to get all that could be said for the other side of the question and to guard against holding an opinion without putting it to full test, I asked *Our Navy* to state their case. Their reply follows:

January 19, 1922.

"My dear Mr. Hoffman:—Replying to your letter of January 16th, yes, *Our Navy* has been engaged in a crusade for some time to stop the use of the term, 'Drunken Sailor.'

As you and your readers must know, a sailor is required to pass an almost perfect physical examination before being admitted into the Navy and from time to time, during their service, they are under observation and tests for physical fitness and cleanliness, etc.

Were these men accustomed to drunken orgies, it would be impossible for them to continue in the Navy.

It is true that occasionally one will meet a sailor on liberty who has had a drop too much, but this class is a small minority and do not linger long in the service, as the service does not tolerate such characters.

Glancing at random through our 1921 files, we have marked a few of our many editorials on the subject of 'Drunken Sailors' and are sending a few to you.

The conscientious sailorman strongly objects to the words, 'Drunken Sailor,' and our files are full of letters received from them quoting various pieces of literature in which this term is used.

Anything you can do to eliminate the term will be greatly appreciated by the entire enlisted force of the United States as well as by"—R. C. SHEPHERD, General Manager.

BEYOND noting that the letter is inconsistent within itself, and that many of its points are irrelevant I offer no comment.

Our Navy sent me some of its issues with marked articles presenting the same line of reasoning and instancing cases in which people protest against the awful phrase or apologize for having used it. If you think any of them strengthen their case, ask *Our Navy* for them. I don't, so I don't take space for them here.

As I pick up your letters themselves I am reminded that there was also a letter of protest (which I either printed or told you about) signed, in typewriting, "The Crew" of the *Maddox*, but without any individual signatures or names.

These letters from Camp-Fire! Many of them are classics and I could weep over having to give you so small a part of their contents. And if Mr. Milstead, *Our Navy et al.* have any doubts, I'll be glad to let them read every last word of all of them—on the one condition that I may sit and watch their faces as they read. If they'll accept my sincere and kind-hearted advice, however, they'll not take a chance. Don't forget that I'm *not* omitting any parts of the letters that support Mr. Milstead's side, except general statements as to the general good qualities of sailors in general, these having not been questioned aside from "drunken sailor." And in giving the little bits against him, heaven knows I'm not picking out the worst. The worst would make him froth at the mouth and beat his finger-tips rapidly on his writing-desk.

The first letter. I omit the names of prominent men who have apologized for using the phrase.

Waterbury, Connecticut.

TRUE there was a time when that would have been considered as any word, but amongst the modern sea-faring people it is very much resented.

I have been thoroughly acquainted with sea-faring people the better part of my life, from deck-hand to admiral and from mess-boy to skipper, and

I know the crafts from dory to full-rigger and from sailing launch to dreadnought. And I wish to state right here and *now*, the phrase "Drunken Sailor" *is* mis-applied, for the number of men I know of at sea there is not anywhere upon the face of this earth any fellow that is . . . or for their number as near total abstainers.

The old phrase of tars is no longer used, applied to sailors, the days of drunkards and vagrants and other miscreants and of ignorant loafers at sea have passed, and the modern American is at sea. Let the phrases of the past die out and take their place with the past where they belong.—L. J. Benton.

THE next writer prefers having his name omitted but says that, since some of his remarks on the protesting gentlemen may be "rather caustic," I may give his name and address. I give only one paragraph, the only one favorable to them, and have omitted from it a word or two that would only rouse their ire:

"It seems to me a very childish complaint upon the part of a few members of a really manly organization, but inasmuch as the magazine will hardly suffer from the omission, I would suggest that the words 'drunken sailor' be left out. You will not hurt any one and will give the gallant crusaders against literary aspersion a sense of victory which will possibly keep them satisfied for a short time."—B.

I'M NOT sure the following isn't satire, but anyhow here it is:

U. S. Naval Training Station,
Great Lakes, Illinois.

"Reference has again been made to a sailor in a manner that is not wholly fitting to any branch of the American Service.

In the short story entitled 'Coconut Grenadiers,' by E. O. Foster, we find 'Spending money like a drunken sailor.'

It is quite easily imagined that any man in an intoxicated condition can spend money as easily as can a drunken sailor. There is also a larger percentage of civilian men that are in an intoxicated condition much more than any sailor is. At the present time very few sailors are intoxicated more than twice a month, whereas there are many men on the outside who are drunk many more times than that and squander much more money than a sailor ever does when he is drunk. Don't you think it would have been just as appropriate for Mr. Foster to have inserted 'Spending money like a drunken man'? Or would it have been absolutely necessary to refer to any man under the influence of liquor? Are there not many ways to point out the rapid spending of money without being drunk? Say for instance a poor man who has been longing for riches since childhood, and then suddenly came into immense wealth. Wouldn't he squander his money?

Hoping this will not receive a repetition as it mars the reputation and good character of what men there are in the Navy that very seldom touch a drop of liquor, we are"—L. J. Churney, Y. S. C., U. S. N., T. J. Linunath, Y. S. C., U. S. N.

THE next:

Bromide, Oklahoma.

"Although I don't believe in encouraging the use of expression, having served with the colors myself, I know that it is often spoken and have heard it myself . . . I am neutral in this affair between you and Mr. Milstead, though really I think the use of such terms reflecting upon the character of our sailor lads should not be encouraged."—G. J. McIntosh.

THAT'S all for that side of the case—one strong support, possibly a second, one neutral, one who treats them with caustic but thinks the phrase better omitted for policy's sake. All the others—25 or 30—are roasts, growls, argumentative body-blows, etc. But the case of the prosecution seems so weak a one that the defense doesn't feel it necessary to bring forward its mass of evidence. Some of them use the ax or the stiletto pretty hard on the complainants and, though it makes gorgeous reading, I fear said complainants would suffer too severely if thus executed in print. But if any doubters want to see those letters, here they are, all carefully kept.

I MAKE one exception. Mr. Milstead *et al.* seem to me to have given the Merchant Marine, as opposed to the Navy, a rough deal, and the merchant marine is entitled to a chance to speak in its own defense. Mr. Milstead can count these letters as one supporting and one neutral case, if he sees it that way.

S. S. Amelia, Port Antonio, Jamaica.

"Have you any objection to a Tramp Steamer dropping her hook for a few minutes and discharging some of the slams, insinuations and slurs taken aboard during present voyage?

I am an American by birth and have spent thirteen years in American tramp and merchant ships, have also been in sail, and must thank Mr. Milstead for his statement that 'sailors' are not a crowd of drunkards, but his letter of Nov. 2, 1920, gave me an awful jolt when he explained the difference between a 'sailor' and a 'man-o'-war'sman.' This seems to be a gentle slam that it is the sailor and not the man-o'-war'sman who consumes the booze. I hope he will not insinuate we drink alki, varnish and shellac, too.

'The Crew' follows up with a typewritten practically anonymous letter asking us to believe the *Maddox* is dry. Personally I do not believe it.

I don't care how much a man drinks but I do object to being accused of drinking the other fellow's share in addition to my own—more so when I am fully aware of the other fellow's drinking abilities. I also object to the remark of 'The Crew': 'Of course people who are familiar with the Navy know that the expression probably reflects on sailors of tramp steamers and merchant ships.'

If Mr. Milstead had been in any of the European ports (Mediterranean especially) during the war and kept both eyes open he would have counted before making the statement: 'The days of such men passed with the beginning of the war if not before.' In fact he would not have made it, there being too many francs to the dollar.

As to 'The Crew' of the *Maddox* I am afraid they are in for a stormy cruise. I wonder if 'The Crew' was in Panama when a portion of the fleet went through the Canal in July, 1919. I was there in a wooden tramp and, take my word for it, I saw some great sights; the order to saloons that no drink was to be sold to men in uniform did not stop the sale of Chinese rum outside of saloons. Has

'The Crew' visited Norfolk or Newport, or does the *Maddox* make such extended trips?

Oh yes, there are plenty of people in Charleston, Panama, Norfolk, Newport and elsewhere familiar with the Navy who will tell 'The Crew' in mighty few words who the expression 'drunken sailor' reflects on.

As far as drinking is concerned we must admit the sailor gets his share, man-o'-war'sman included, but I can not see why the term 'drunken sailor' should always reflect on the Merchant Marine when both men are drinking out of the same bottle.

My experience is that the man-o'-war'sman has always been proud of the quantity and quality of booze he could consume and both Mr. Milstead and 'The Crew' will admit that the alki and shellac are kept under lock and key on their respective vessels. I wonder why? Such is not the case on this tramp.

If Mr. Milstead and 'The Crew' desire to inform the public through 'Camp-Fire' that Messrs. Brown and Pladwell are in error in referring to them as drunken sailors I have no objection whatever. Probably they expect the authors to apologize and say the remark reflected on sailors of tramp steamers and merchant ships, and not on man-o'-war'smen. This I do object to.

Mr. Milstead suggests the civil population request editors make a distinction between man-o'-war'smen and sailors. I am of the same opinion. I might also suggest that a distinction be made between the *U. S. S. Maddox* and a real man-o'-war'sman. The civil population, of which I am one, knowing little of ships, are probably under the impression that the *Maddox* is an honest-to-goodness man-o'-war'sman with one thousand or more native-born temperance advocates, but such is far from the case. There was plenty of room for the signature of every one of them in the one column of 'Camp-Fire' that contained their little song without using an anonymous signature.

I have seen the actions of sailors and man-o'-war'smen at home and abroad, before, during and after the war, and from my observations I certainly think Mr. Milstead got a fly in his grapejuice when he jumped Mr. Brown. Mr. Milstead also accuses Mr. Brown of throwing slams and insinuations at the Navy, but Mr. M. has no scruples against slamming others.

'The Crew' does not stop at slams and insinuations but hands the sailor on the tramp the whole bill-of-fare from soup to nuts. He also says there are so many people who are not informed *what class* of men go to sea as sailors. How about 'Seamen *Third Class*' as correct signature for the Maddox letter? Also *does* the *Maddox* go to sea?

I admire Mr. Milstead's stand on his defense of the Navy although he does slam me; as to 'The Crew,' he talks like a young kid who (etc.)"—EDWARD ROGERS.

Ft. Stanton, New Mexico.

"I do not wish to join in the controversy concerning the 'Drunken Sailor' expressions, but I firmly believe I voice the sentiments of the thousands of young Americans in the American Merchant Marine, many of whom are ex-navy men, when I take exception to some remarks made by Mr. Milstead and the crew of the *Maddox*.

Contrary to the impression they apparently wish to convey, the personnel of the Merchant Marine is not composed of drunkards and the riffraff of the nation, but is made up in a large part by industrious, sober and ambitious young Americans who have taken up the sea-going professions as a life work. They take as much pride in the Merchant Marine as Navy men do, and always shall resent any such reflection upon their characters.

Mr. Milstead says: 'If the civil population had any idea of the difference between a sailor and a man-o'-war's man, the latter a sea-going man of the Navy, the former of the Merchant Marine, they would urgently request their editors to make some distinction between the two classes.' Such an implication is a gross insult to every American merchant sailor and his family as well.

Of course, in every class of men we find the habitual drunkard, and the Merchant Marine is no exception, or the Navy either, for that matter. I can best express my opinion of Mr. Milstead's letter by his own words, taken from his letter to the editor and published in 'Camp-Fire.' 'I am anxious for him to know how ignorant I consider his remark.' If the distinction between the two classes was made, and both investigated, rest assured that the result would be no discredit to the Merchant Marine boys.

No less an insult is the following remarks from the crew of the *Maddox*, published in the same issue.

'Of course, people who are familiar with the Navy know that the expression probably reflects on sailors of tramp steamers and merchant ships . . .'

To say the least Mr. Milstead and the crew of the *U. S. S. Maddox* owe the American Merchant Marine sailors an abject apology."—A MERCHANT SEAMAN.

THERE were two or three other letters in defense of the men of the Merchant Marine, but this case needs no better statement than the above.

Personally I have nothing to add concerning these militant crusaders against a phrase. But I would suggest to Mr. Milstead and "The Crew" that they devote a few days intensive study to the meaning of the Golden Rule, interspersed with occasional contemplation of what their Bibles have to say about the mote in the other fellow's eye and the beam in your own. They might also ask some man what is the ordinary man's conception of snobbishness. A book on elementary logic might be able to teach them and *Our Navy* the differences among the various statements and ideas now very seriously confused in their minds. Last of all I beg to suggest to *Our Navy* and Mr. Milstead that when a man receives an apology he generally does not feel that it becomes him to boast about it or advertise it.

AS TO facts, every one knows that some of both the Navy and the Merchant Marine are drunken. So are some editors, carpenters, doctors, mechanics, etc. But stating that fact doesn't slur any one of these groups, while denying it is merely silly.

The years should have established this magazine's friendly feeling for all who follow the sea. If they haven't, then I'm not going to try to establish it through a phrase or the absence of it.

AS TO drunkenness, though I've been drunk and am no total abstainer, I'm against it. As a habit it doesn't happen to have fastened on me, and when I get free from the various bad habits I do have I may begin telling drunkards how rotten they are. I hope not until then. If there weren't in the world so many worse things than drunkenness I might get more rampant about it. I wonder just how *Our Navy*, Mr. Milstead and "The Crew" rank in the moral scale a sober grafter, a prohibitionist who adulterates food, a teetotaler who—oh well, is the phrase crusade the best they can do in that line for the Navy and the country?

AS TO apologizing to these people for that phrase's having appeared in this magazine I'll do so when they can convince me that the sailors, in or out of the Navy (or the Navy itself), really suffer from it and when they can show me that all such expressions as "swear like a trooper," "drunk as a lord," "abuse like a fish-wife," "tell it to the marines," etc., should be barred from fiction or that sailors should be the one privileged group among all these others. Not till then, and even then not to these complainants but to sailors in general. Since even a few sailors object to the phrase I'm quite ready to try to avoid it in my own writings out of mere respect to the feelings of this minority, but certainly I will not bar it from this magazine. Each of our writers may do as he thinks best as to using or not using it when it seems of real furtherance to his story.

I'm sorry for the "Camp-Fire" space all this has taken. But this small matter is merely a sample of a kind of thing growing too common among us and it is just as well to give one of these samples a threshing out once in a while.

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom, Albert Richard Wetjen rises and introduces himself on the occasion of his first story in our magazine. Contrary to custom, I've not taken out of this letter a word of praise for our magazine. I know that many of you enjoy hearing praise of it and there seems no harm in passing on to you once in a while a wee sample of the good words that come in. Be sure I'll not let enough of them get into print to give our gatherings the savor of self-praise meetings.

Harrisburg, Oregon.

ADVENTURE? Yes, a little. I was born in London, England, just twenty-two years ago. At fourteen I was at sea, at sixteen I had been shipwrecked twice, the first time in the Bay of Fundy by fire and explosion, the second time on the Newfoundland coast from fog and the sea. The latter wreck I lived in a rude hut of timbers from the ship for five weeks or more, and fed mostly on fish, with the result that on rescue I was taken to the General Hospital, Halifax, Nova Scotia, with typhoid fever.

I have sailed pretty well all over the world, and had one or two adventures ashore. In Africa I worked on a banana plantation on the Umbilo River, and went to Kimberley to look at diamond mining. I have worked my way across Canada as a stevedore, saw-mill hand, section-hand, farm laborer and hobo. In Vancouver, B. C., I signed on the barque *Ralph* for a voyage round the Horn to Cape Town, but "jumped" her at Victoria for reasons personal and painful. Among other things I have worked in the Oregon hop and hay fields and have reported for Oregon papers. My worst criminal exploit was, I believe, running "booze" across the Manitoba-North Dakota border, without even knowing I was doing it, being hired merely to ride a horse. I perhaps ought to mention that I served in the Manchester Regiment of the British Army for a while during the war. I think that is all, except that I think *Adventure* is the one magazine that publishes stories by men who know. Too often the men who know don't write, and the men who don't try to. So-long.—A. R. WETJEN.

FOR several years Camp-Fire has been hearing—from Arthur O. Friel among others—rumors of still existing specimens of prehistoric animals in South America, and now, it seems, accumulated reports of this kind are stirring science into more definite investigation. And now here is an interesting report from Central America, setting forth the mystery of "La Comalengua" and citing the killing of a dragon-like beast. What is the explanation?

Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

Despite its small size and the time that has elapsed since its discovery by Balboa, large parts of Central America are still unknown and unexplored. In the mountains on the Atlantic side of Nicaragua and in the Mosquito Reserve in Honduras there are animals that are the survivals of types that have been extinct elsewhere for ages.

THE "danto," with its cloven hoofs and its ability to walk under water for periods exceeding fifteen minutes at a time, is found in Nicaragua and, due to its size and its habit of charging without hesitation any noise that attracts its attention, is one of the most dangerous of wild animals, fully comparable to the water buffalo.

While the "danto" is feared, still it is vulnerable to the high-powered bullet, and it is well known, whereas no one is recorded as ever having seen the "Comalengua," though the results of its ferocity provide countrysides with chills of terror for weeks at a time.

In southern Honduras and in eastern Salvador, on the dry Pacific Coast, cattle have been found with their tongues eaten away, their shoulders brusied, and other evidences that they died in agony, but no trace of the assailant has ever been found.

SOME years ago, in Bustillos, El Salvador, on a ranch property of an Austrian company, four bulls were found one morning on the soft mud of the marsh, dead and with their tongues eaten away. Their shoulders were bruised as if a huge rope had been tightened about them, but although the mud was so soft that coyotes left tracks, no trace of any animal strong enough to kill a bull could be found.

Another strange feature of these happenings is that they never take place two nights in the same district. Invariably, the next killing is reported from thirty to forty miles away, and after a succession of such killings on succeeding nights at such distances, nothing will be reported for many weeks, then the killings will commence again, and in the same fashion.

SHORTLY after the events in Bustillos, a bull was found dead in a pasture near Nacaome, Honduras. The owner on being advised of the fact and recalling the incident in Salvador, ordered no one to approach the animal until he secured four excellent Indian trackers from a near-by village. When the Indians arrived, they could find not a single trace that any animal had passed by there, though these Indians could almost trace the path of a humming-bird.

Three hundred yards from where the bull lay, on the banks of a tiny stream they found the remains of the bull's tongue, vomited up by the killer. But despite all efforts, no clue could be obtained as to where the animal had gone, or as to what sort of beast had done the killing.

Many other attacks of like nature have been reported, among them one recently in Choluteca, Honduras. In some cases milch cows are found dead, with the tongue and udder eaten away.

MANY conjectures have naturally been made as to the motive and the killer, but to date nothing has been definitely proven. Some assert that the killer is a giant alicante, the feared Mexican snake, which is said to travel in trees and to be able to hurl itself through the air for a distance of some twenty feet, from branch to branch. This snake grows to a length of thirty feet, and no doubt would be powerful enough to choke a bull if wrapped around the animal's throat. But so heavy a snake would leave a trail that trained hunters could readily see, and southern Honduras is too open to permit the snake to travel very far in trees.

Further, no record of an alicante having been seen in that district has come to the notice of the writer, though he has inquired of old residents in many sections. The only snake of the boa family that grows to considerable size in southern Honduras is the "masaquate," a sluggish, harmless reptile that sometimes attains a length of sixteen feet. It destroys poisonous reptiles and is esteemed by ranchers for that fact. This snake does not attack cattle.

If the killer really be an alicante and capable of traveling thirty miles in a night, the tongue of cattle must be merely a tidbit, for there are not enough killings to keep so large a reptile alive, nor would one tongue suffice to make a meal for the snake.

OTHER old-timers say that the killing is done by some survival from the past ages, pointing to the existence of the "danto" as proof that some species have escaped the general extinction of the prehistoric animals, and giving the following incident as specific corroboration:

About twenty years ago, the local military commandant in the Salvadorean town of Gotera, an enthusiastic hunter, was returning empty-handed from a hunt about eight o'clock, after it was entirely dark. In passing through a rocky gulch, overgrown with bushes to a height of ten or twelve feet, he heard a rustling in the bush that startled his horse. Angry, and at the same time hoping to retrieve his bad luck of the day's hunt at the last moment, he emptied both barrels of his shotgun in the direction of the sound. The rustling increased and the commandant, fearing lest the unknown attack his horse without his being able to defend himself, continued his way to Gotera.

Three days later some villagers reported to the commandant that a strange animal was lying dead in the same gulch, some distance above the point where the commandant had fired. On going to the spot indicated by the villagers, he found there a species of dragon, some twelve feet long, with long curved claws on both the feet and on the first joint of fore and hind legs. With these claws an unbreakable hold could be secured. The dragon had been killed by the chrages of the shotgun, which had torn its breast at such short range. The commandant made a sketch of the beast, a copy of which he sent to an American friend of his, at that time a resident of the district.

However, if such an animal were the "Comalengua," the huge claws would tear gashes in the bulls' hides and the trail of such an animal would be visible to all. The mystery of the "Comalengua" is as far from solution as ever.—JOHN E. KELLY.

MANY of you have kept your back issues of the magazine from the first, but of course others, particularly those who keep more or less on the move, do not. Some send their back issues to hospitals, prisons, etc., a few sell them through our free "Back Issues" department, some cache them along the trail, under the Camp-Fire sign "71," for other comrades to find when they come along and leave for still other comrades. Perhaps there is no better use for them than to give those in hospitals, homes and prisons the benefit of them, but this isn't always practicable or easy. Among other uses, why not bear the Camp-Fire Stations in mind? Back copies could be held by the keepers for the use of visiting comrades or, one or two at a time, turned over to them on condition they'd cache them somewhere along the road under the "71" sign.

A STATION may be in any shop, home or other reputable place. The only requirements are that a Station shall display the regular Station sign, provide a box or drawer for mail to be called for and preserve the register book.

No responsibility for mail is assumed by anybody; the Station merely uses ordinary care. Entries in register to be confined to name or serial number, route, destination, permanent address and such other brief notes or remarks as desired; each Station can impose its own limit on space to be used. Registers become permanent property of Station; signs remain property of this magazine, so that if there is due cause of complaint from members a Station can be discontinued by withdrawing sign.

A Station bulletin board is strongly to be recommended as almost necessary. On it travelers can leave tips as to conditions of trails, etc., resident members can post their names and addresses, such hospitality as they care to offer, calls for any travelers who are familiar with countries these residents once knew, calls for particular men if they happen that way, etc., notices or tips about local facilities and conditions. Letters to resident members can be posted on this bulletin-board.

Any one who wishes is a member of Camp-Fire and therefore entitled to the above Station privileges subject to the Keeper's discretion. Those offering hospitality of any kind do so on their own responsibility and at their own risk and can therefore make any discriminations they see fit. Traveling members will naturally be expected to remember that they are merely guests and act accordingly.

Keepers answer letters only if they wish. For local information write "Ask Adventure.";

A Station may offer only the required register and mail facilities or enlarge its scope to any degree it pleases. Its possibilities as headquarters for a local club or resident Camp-Fire members are excellent.

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A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

Please Note: **To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses for full statement in alternate issues. Do *not* write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.**

1, 2. The Sea. In Two Parts
3. Islands and Coasts
4, 5. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts
6. Australia and Tasmania
7. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
8. New Guinea
9. Philippine Islands
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Standing Information

The Roer Elephant Gun

AN INTERESTING weapon of pioneer days in South Africa:

Question:—"I have frequently come across in books references to the roer or elephant gun used by the Dutch in South Africa, but I have never read a description of it. All I know is that it was a very heavy, single-barrel, smooth-bore gun, using a very large ball or 'a handful of bullets.'

What was average weight of gun? Length of barrel? Bore? Weight of ball? Charge of powder?

Did stock extend to end of barrel? Was stock fastened with bands like a musket? Was it flint or percussion lock?

Any other information by which such a gun can be recognized and identified?

Stamped envelope enclosed."—JAMES W. CAMAK, Athens, Ga.

Answer, by Capt. Franklin:—I have seen many an elephant gun in Africa but don't believe I am qualified to answer the technical questions. But you can't beat us "Ask Adventure" editors, so I am getting the correct information for you from a friend of mine who is the largest collector of guns in the U. S. A.—Mr. C. A. Hardy of Chicago. I have been under fire of a roer elephant gun, and it sounded as if they were firing the legs of kettles at one.

You will hear from me in about a week with full data.

And here's the further answer received by Mr. Camak through the courtesy of Mr. Hardy:

Chicago, Ill.

I have seen several of the old Dutch colonists' guns, although I never obtained one for my collection. My notes show that these guns were built along the following lines. Of course at first they were all muzzle-loaders. All that I have seen were double barrel, but I know there were built single barrels also.

As the Dutch did not go into South Africa until after the perfection of the percussion cap, I doubt whether any flintlock guns were ever built on these lines. All I have ever seen were percussion or breech-loading; the models of both were the same.

The characteristics of the gun were as follows: Weight, 14 to 21 lbs. Length of bbl., 20 to 24 inches. Bore, 4 bore and 8 bore. Weight of the ball, 4 gage, 1,510 grains; 8 gage, 1,092 grains. Charge of powder: 4 bore, 12 to 16 drams, black powder; 8 bore, 8 to 10 drams, black powder.

Stock: All of the guns I have seen were stocked in the regulation manner. None of them had the wood stock extending to the end of short barrel. The guns were so large and heavy at the breech, purposely made heavy to reduce the recoil, that there was sufficient wood in the stock at the standing breech to enable a good sound connection to be made between the barrel and the stock. All of the stocks of the muzzle-loading guns that I have seen were pinned on.

Ignition: As South Africa was settled after the percussion principle was fully developed, I doubt whether any flintlock guns were ever built in these sizes and with this arrangement. Rifling: The early guns of this type were smooth bore, but later rifling was introduced. The guns which I saw had two grooves and used the so-called Brunswick system with the bandit bullet, either round or conical. The bullets were generally hardened by an addition of more tin than we use at the present time, and the 4-bore gun shot accurately enough so it was used on elephants up to 100 yards.

As powder and gun construction improved and the use of the conical ball in rifles became common practise, the bore of the gun was reduced until it became standard practise to use 10 gage. The weight of the bullet, however, remained about the same. With the introduction of breech loading, smaller bores and higher muzzle velocities came into more general use and the old roer was laid aside.

Sir Samuel W. Baker, whom I consider the premier sporting hunter of history, disposes of the gun proposition in a short chapter in his work "Wild Beasts and Their Ways." Of course, at the time he wrote this, black powder was used exclusively; but he states what we now know to be a definite physical fact—that if you were to kill a big animal you must use a big gun and a big, heavy bullet. For many years he used a rifled double-barrel black-powder gun shooting 6 to 8 drams of powder and having a ball weighing about 650 grains, but he expresses a preference in hunting elephants for a 10-gage small bore with a 1,200-grain conical ball driven by 12 drams of powder.

When breech loading was adopted these large guns were generally made 8 bore and used brass cases. Almost universally they were the lever under-grade action, this being the strongest possible fastening for holding the barrel to the frame, as it relieved a certain portion of the strain on the standing breech.

Hope this covers the information you are looking for and assure you that I will be glad to be of service to you in reference to any of these old weapons at any time in the future.—C. A. HARDY.

Names and addresses of "Ask Adventure" department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in alternate issues of the magazine. Do not write to the magazine itself.

In British Columbia's Central Lake District

HERE'S wonderful country to take your camera to:

Question:—"A gentleman at the Canadian National Railroad office gave me your name and address so I could write you concerning some information I'd like to get. This gentleman told me you are acquainted with the country around the lakes north and west of Prince George. I am expecting to take a trip up there to take photographs, and will start at Babine Lake near Pelling by canoe and then navigate to the different lakes either by river between the lakes or portages.

Is there much snow up there from September 15 to about December 1?

Will it be necessary to take snow-shoes?

Can we navigate the rivers that connect the lakes?

What kind of game are we liable to meet?

Would you advise taking two dogs up with us?

Is the Fraser River navigable from Prince George to its mouth near Vancouver?"—C. A. PYL, Seattle, Washington.

Answer, by Mr. Carson:—As a rule there is very little snowfall in the François Lake district before December 1st. February is the real snow month. It is possible that you may meet with abnormal conditions; but in that case you can easily obtain snow-shoes if you should need them.

Certainly you can navigate the connecting links between Tacla, Babine and the other lakes with a canoe. In many cases there are portages, but you will find water transportation your best method of getting in and out with your supplies. I question if you can do much canoeing after October fifteenth on those waters; but you could make Fort Babine at the head of Babine Lake, cross over to Tacla at West Landing by the old Hazelton-Manson Creek trail and then mush down the shores of Tacla Lake.

Winter in that section lasts practically from November first to April first or even later.

You *may* meet with moose, deer and bear as these animals are fairly well represented in that country; but duck, grouse and rabbit will be a heap better to depend upon as a change from swine-bosom.

I can not see what use you would have for dogs. They would not be needed for hunting and in my opinion would be a nuisance generally. It is doubtful if you have any snow that would warrant the use of sleds before December or even January first.

The Fraser is far from navigable for any distance. At Fort George there is navigable water up-river as far as Tête Jaune Cache, but it is hard pulling in places. Down-river navigation is again interrupted at Soda Creek. Then comes a long stretch of rapid and cañon reaching practically to Yale.

Better route in by rail to either Fort George or some closer point recommended by your local railway agent, outfit there and get the advice of some resident as to your best route. I believe you would be as well satisfied by going in by way of Stuart Lake through Trembleur Lake to Tacla, then cross from West Landing by the Manson Creek trail to Fort Babine and come down Lake Babine to your nearest railway station on the Grand Trunk Pacific.

As you would probably guess, that country has changed so in the last five or six years that it is pretty hard to give up-to-date information as to railway connection and so forth. Fairly good maps may be obtained gratis by writing the Deputy Minister of Lands, Victoria, B. C.; but it is the old-timer, the man right on the job, who can give you the real dope, and I would earnestly recommend that you get in touch with some such person at Fort George and get his advice on the route you propose to take.

I note that I have written in the first part of my letter in a way that would make it appear that there was a waterway between Tacla and Babine Lakes; but you will note my remarks *re* the trail from Fort Babine and not be misled in this particular.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing whatever but reply postage and self-addressed envelop.

More About Sleeping Sickness

OUT—Beadle to Miller to Miller:

Question:—"I read recently about the sleeping sickness in the United States. I always thought that sleeping sickness was peculiar to Africa. I would like to know if the sickness reported in the U. S. A. is the same."—ERNEST MILLER, Modesto, Calif.

Answer, by Mr. Miller:—Your inquiry on sleeping sickness comes just after I have received from Mr. Beadle, who conducts a department of "Ask Adventure," a correction to a former answer I gave to this same query. As Mr. Beadle seems an authority on the subject I will quote him:

"There are two kinds of tsetse fly, *glossina morsitans* and *palpalis*. There is a germ—a very much alive germ—called *trypanosomiasis*, which is sleeping sickness all dolled up. At one time the disease was supposed to be derived from *miasa*, as malaria was; but they discovered—twelve or fifteen years ago—that the tsetse fly was the host. He bites an infected man and about twelve days later the microbe is ready for business, sitting inside *morsitans'* proboscis, and if he bites a human the latter is properly initiated. Later it was discovered that the brother fly *palpalis* also carries the disease (the germ).

"The origin is unknown, except that it came up the Congo swamp belts into Rhodesia. Whites do contract it, but not so frequently *pro rata* as the natives, as naturally they don't lounge under trees much in a swamp or near to it. I have seen white missionaries and officials suffering from it. Have been bitten several times myself, and for years didn't know whether I was caught. For cures they have tried arsenic in various compounds, combinations of salvarsan, but with no effect; even freezing the spine, which holds up the microbe; but as one hasn't much use for a frozen spine the cure is not popular. The symptoms begin with slight fever; a general restlessness, swelling of the glands, and a slight rash, the patient becoming more and more emaciated and somnolent until finally he will go to sleep, and passes away in a coma. *Trypanosomiasis* is not related to the so-called sleeping sickness of the United States."

Thus Mr. Beadle, and I take off my hat to him; but am not convinced that if this account is published in "A. A." I won't have medicos writing disputatiously of the above. Quite recently I read in a reputable medical magazine that the sleeping-sickness microbe had not been isolated, and again read that tsetse-fly inoculation was an unproven theory. Yet Mr. Beadle refers me to the School of Tropical Medicine, Liverpool, England, if I wish to check his facts.

I give in, with this warning—don't expect scientific facts in an average American magazine. What funny stuff I have read about the sleeping sickness!

Camping and Hiking in the Adirondacks

THIS outfit seems easy enough to carry:

Question:—"I intend to start from N. Y. C., with another fellow, early in July, and spend about a month or two in the Adirondacks. Never been up that way, and would like to know conditions for camping and road hiking.

What is the best outfit for such a trip? We have shelter-halves, old issue marine pack, khaki breeches, putts and hob-nailed shoes, blankets, good plumb ax, khaki shirts, etc.

Is the carrying of a gun or rifle permitted without a license? We are not hunters, but would like to carry a gun for protection, and the rifle if we can. We have at present a Smith & Wesson .45 six-shot army model revolver. What would be the best point to start from, as we intend to go by train to a good starting-point?

Now, Mr. Spears, don't be afraid to hand out the info. as we are rookies practically and need all the suggestions and advice we can scrape together. We like the outdoors very much and want to get started right."—NELSON M. JACOBS, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Answer, by Mr. Spears:—I'd say get map of Adirondacks from Conservation Commission, Albany, N. Y. (free) and start on foot, say from Northville or some town along the railroad up that way along Lake Champlain. Carry compass. Leave your revolver at home. Nothing there to worry about. Carry a .22 single-shot or repeating rifle, if you want. Get a hunting license, $1.10 from any city clerk, town clerk, where you start from. Best to have it.

Carry ten-cent-store cooking and table ware. Get a light wire grid to cook on. You'll buy supplies where you start from, and your map will show towns ahead. You can buy 'most anything you'll need, and with your outfit will have a right good time.

Camp almost anywhere, by woods, brooks, and carry some mosquito dope with you—mix one ounce of pennyroyal with three or four ounces of beef or mutton tallow (warm tallow till nearly melted and mix in the pennyroyal).

I'd look into a book or two on camping out, and am enclosing list that you can pick from and order through any book-store.

Fishing Along Snake River

WYOMING offers a wonderful opportunity for a fishing-trip by auto, according to Mr. Middleton, one of our newer "A. A." men:

Question:—"This Summer my partner and I intend to make a fishing-trip of a few weeks along Snake River in the Jackson Hole country of northern Wyoming. We expect to motor through, camping *en route*. A few years ago I made a hurried motor trip through this territory and spent a wonderful morning along the Snake with a rod.

1. What is your opinion about the time of year and the locality?

2. Outside of fishing equipment what would you advise in the way of grub for a stay of three weeks on the ground?

3. Where should one write to get information on unfiled land in that territory; or can proved claims be bought right for a Summer camp?

Any information or advice you feel disposed to offer will be surely appreciated."—CHARLES A. THOMAS, Corunna, Ind.

Answer, by Mr. Middleton:—I think that without doubt you have picked on an ideal vacation trip.

1. The time and location are all right. In fact, any time between July 1 and Sept. 1 will find Wyoming streams at their best, as the high waters, usual in the Spring, have passed and the streams have got back to normal; and while I personally have never fished the Snake, I know that this stream, or any of its tributaries, furnishes excellent fishing.

2. The grub question is a hard one to answer. If I were outfitting myself for such a trip I'd go a little light, and replenish, according to our appetite, from time to time, at some of the small towns near; but try starting with the following:

Coffee, 2 lbs.; tea, ½ lb.; sugar, 5 lbs.; a dozen cans of milk, a 10-lb. pail of lard, spuds, 20 lbs.; ½ side of bacon, ½ doz. packages of pancake flour, a 25-lb. sack of flour for quick bread and for rolling your fish in before frying; and use your own tastes as to canned goods, etc. As you are going by auto, you can take a few luxuries along. And remember, you can always restock within a reasonable distance.

3. Write to U. S. Land Commissioner, Jackson, Wyo., for land open to entry. But did you know that a site for a Summer home can be leased from the government, who will also allow enough timber to build a Summer camp, at a very nominal price—from $12 to $20 per year? By doing this in a desirable locality one would always have a camp to go to when vacation time came. If you are interested ask the U. S. Land Commissioner, at Jackson, regarding it.

If I can be of any further service, don't hesitate to ask me. I sure envy you your trip, for I'm sure you'll have a royal time.

What an A. B. Seaman Must Know

BEING a shellback is a lot more than just riding with the ship:

Question:—"Would you kindly tell me what an A. B. seaman has to know and do? How do you box the compass and splice ropes? How to tie different knots, and what they are used for?"—F. D., South Boston, Mass.

P. S. If this goes into the *Adventure*, please do not mention my name.

Answer, by Mr. B. Brown:—An A. B. seaman has to know how to "hand, reef and steer" on a sailing-vessel. He must know every line in the ship and its leads; how to make any kind of a knot or splice, including splicing wire rope. Must be a good hand with the palm and needle and able to patch canvas. The requirements are not quite so onerous in a steamship, but the more he knows of all of these things, the better seaman he is, in any kind of a ship. It would be impossible in the limits of any letter to tell you how to make all of the knots and splices. Besides, it would require diagrams or pictures to enable you to understand. You can get all of this information out of "Knotting and Splicing" by Hasluck, price 50 cents, which you can get from the Rudder Publishing Co., Murray St., New York.

"Boxing the compass" means merely naming all the points on a compass card in regular order, usually commencing at North and going around "with the sun."

Sport in the Bruce Peninsula

GAME and fish that are worth going after:

Question:—"A few months ago I came into possession of a piece of ground in Lindsay Township, Bruce County, Ontario, Can.

Seeing your name among the list of those giving information in "Ask Adventure," I would like to have your opinion in regard to hunting, fishing and trapping in the upper part of Bruce County. This ground lies on a road between Lindsay and St. Edmonds Townships and about the center of the peninsula (Bruce).

I would be very grateful to you if you answer the following questions:

1. What kind of game is to be found there?

2. Is fishing any good in the inland lakes and streams in this region?

3. How is it for trapping, and what animals are to be found there?

4. What is the nature of the ground? That is: is this part high or low ground? Can one find timber there, or has it all been cut? Is it settled to any extent?

5. Give me the address of some one from whom I can get a map of Bruce County; also Lindsay Township."—Harry Benadum, Detroit, Mich.

Answer, by Mr. Catton:—1. The game to be found in the Bruce Peninsula includes deer (a few), an odd bear (probably), lots of partridge, ruffled grouse and rabbits. The fur-bearers include beaver (a few), an occasional otter, mink, muskrats (lots), rabbits, a few fox and skunk, mink and weasels. Also there were, last Fall, a few wolves. This information is obtained from a friend who hunted through there.

2. The fishing on both sides of the peninsula and in all the waters tributary thereto, is the best to be found; especially on the bay side. There are very few lakes in the peninsula proper, though innumerable streams.

3. Answered in part in 1. Trapping in this section is pretty well worn out as a paying proposition. Trapped out.

4. The high ground on the peninsula is on the bay side, though none of it can be called low ground; that is, it is not swampy. On the contrary, the formation is rock—just rock. Rough it is, vegetation growing wherever there is enough earth to sprout a blade of grass. Timber—the big stuff—is, I am afraid, gone long since; the second growth and new growth now, though, should be big enough for building purposes—if that is what you have in mind. The north half of the peninsula is not settled, as far as I know.

5. For maps write Mr. H. A. Macdonell, Director of Colonization, Parliament Buildings, Toronto, Ont.; or to Mr. G. H. Ferguson, Minister of Lands, Forests and Mines.

Mining in Colombia

THE little fellow stands a chance to fit his size; better go to Ecuador instead:

Question:—"My pal and I are thinking of going to Colombia in a short while. He is 21 and I'm 20.

We are both big, strong and healthy. We've worked all over New England and made lots of money for other people. We want some for ourselves, and we decided Colombia looked promising. We've camped and hunted quite a bit, so can handle ourselves in that line. We've about two hundred bucks between us.

I think we ought to work our way to the Southwest and there learn as much about mining, horses, camping, etc., as we can and then go to Colombia. My pal thinks we should work our way by sea to Colombia, then work until we had a stake. He says we could learn about mining, etc., down there. Which do you consider the wisest course? Neither of us is skilled in any trade, so we would have to depend on manual labor to get by.

What is the best time of the year to start? We've heard that the coast isn't very healthy, but we are going back into the country. Will the use of quinin and ordinary precautions be sufficient?

We can only speak English. Will that get us by? Where do you think we ought to strike for in Colombia? We prefer the mining line, but would try anything else that was profitable enough.

If you think we should go by the Southwest how long do you judge it would take us to pick up enough knowledge to go to S. A.?

If you think we should go by sea what would you advise us to do? Go to New York and try to get a job on a fruit boat going south? We have never been to sea, so what kind of a job should we try for?

We should be able to make Colombia with two hundred bucks by working part of the way, hadn't we? If you think this letter is too long don't bother with it, but any information you send us will be gratefully received."—John F. Ryan, Fitchburg, Mass.

Answer, by Mr. Young:—During the last three or four years many large mining interests have gobbled up the majority of the mining-land and prospective mining-land in the republic of Colombia. Prospecting is forbidden in the zones owned and controlled by such companies, some very large districts being closed at the present time. They are mining gold by ore, dredging, and placering, or sluicing; also much platinum is coming out each month.

There is no doubt about Colombia being rich in mineral; but due to the above facts I consider the neighboring republic of Ecuador the best place for prospectors to try for a bonanza. This republic lies between Peru and Colombia, both of which are known mineral-producing countries. Little actual prospecting has been done in it, and thousands of square miles are unexplored.

Canoes and Their Makers

HERE'S information on the subject from a professional:

Question:—"Can you give me a list of the important canoe companies in the United States and Canada? Also give me your ideas on the different makes and models as to their ease in paddling and their ability to weather a good wind.

I am using an eighteen-foot torpedo-model Kennebec now."—D. W. Easton, Jr., Rockhurst, Lake George, N. Y.

Answer, by Mr. Phillips:—Chestnut Canoe Co., Fredericktown, New Brunswick, Can.; Peterborough Canoe Co., Peterborough, Ontario, Can.; Old Town Canoe Co., Old Town, Me.; White Canoe Co., Old Town, Me.; Morris Canoe Co., Veazie, Me.; Thompson Canoe Co., Peshtigo, Wis.; Gunderson Canoe Co., Eau Claire, Wis.; Racine Canoe Co., Racine, Wis.

The Peterborough canoe is built for speed. They were used exclusively by the Canadian Rangers in the Quitico Provincial Park; but they have changed to the Chestnut in the past two years. The Chestnut is built on the Old Town lines.

The Old Town canoe, Acta model, is used in my work, which is the guiding of parties of fourteen to eighteen year old boys through the Superior National Forest and Quitico Park. If I were choosing a canoe for my own use I would select the Old Town Guide Special, 17 feet. Our Western canoes in large part are poorly and cheaply constructed. Your Kennebec canoe is a good one.

Flivvering through Mexico

CACTUS and bear-grass don't make the best paving-materials in the world for a road that isn't there anyway:

Question:—"If a person were to leave any given point in Texas, driving a Ford 'whoopie,' make it to say Guaymas or Empalme, and then turn south, time being no object, how far would he get? What I mean is as to road conditions? Is it possible to traverse the length of Mexico, and if so, can a man go still farther? Would it be possible to carry gas enough to make it from one base of supplies to another?

I am figuring on putting in a thirty-gallon gas-tank to replace the ordinary ten-gallon Ford tank. I would be dependent on no one but myself to make car repairs, and would be able to camp at any spot I chose and take down the engine and go over it if necessary. The big question with me is, how far would the roads be passable?

Could a man enjoy hunting and fishing to any extent along the way? Would I go through any bad snake country, or would I have to make provision against them? I used to think that a good hair rope was ample. Would it be enough for the snakes in question?

Would I meet up with anything like the Gila monster? I once woke up and found one cuddled up against my leg, and I sure rose up in the morning air and did a quick job of shucking my blanket."—DAVID L. MAR, Caddo, Texas.

Answer, by Mr. Whiteaker:—Your letter was received a few days ago and I will say in reply that you would have some pretty hard going if you attempted such a trip as your letter shows. The roads are nothing to figure on except near the towns. There are some good roads near cities as there are many autos down there, and the roads have been improved. Out in the rural districts the roads are not much more than paths. The Mexican two-wheel carts are narrow gage, so the roads are built, where they are built, accordingly.

The country is very rough as most mountainous countries are, so the tires would not last long after being cut with the rocks and jabbed with cacti and Spanish daggers or bear-grass. Every shrub in that section is covered with thorns.

Such a trip as you contemplate making could be done if, as you say time is no object, you have the time and money to spare; but for my part I would rather make it on horseback or by walking than run the risk of breaking down in the desert far from water, inhabitants, or food.

The question of gas would not be a hard one to solve, as you could get that in most of the towns of any size. Gasoline evaporates rapidly in the desert air, and the larger the container the more rapidly.

There is plenty of game on the route you outline, but you would run the risk of being arrested or likely shot by ruralists if found with firearms. That is a new order that has recently gone into effect. The Government is trying to stamp out the guerrillas, and all found with weapons that haven't a right to carry them are to be treated as bandits. They are getting strict over the border lately.

Another thing will be passports, which in the past were hardly ever thought of but now are very important.

The snakes are not so bad except on water-courses, where they hide in the grass. You would not have to sleep on the ground anyway. A hair rope is good protection.

The Gila monster is found in that country as well as in Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico; but you may not meet up with any, and if you do they would run from you. Their bite is not often fatal to man.

It would be better to have an extra tank than to put in such a large one. Accidents happen to tanks.

Moose Territory of Canada

THE big brutes are running wild in New Brunswick and northern Ontario; but to Mr. Sangster's mind the best shooting is in northwestern Quebec, unless we go to the extreme West—northern British Columbia or the Alaska region:

Question:—"A party of three of us are contemplating a big-game hunting-trip into Canada, especially for moose, and I wish you would state where in your opinion is the best moose territory we can go to."—F. W. CURRAN, Gloversville, N. Y.

Answer, by Mr. Sangster:—Where is the best moose territory in Canada? That is a question you will have a difference of opinion on, but few have the qualification of experience to formulate an opinion fairly on this.

The writer has hunted the best of New Brunswick and of northern Ontario and Quebec. I unreservedly state northwestern Quebec is today the pick of territory for successful moose-hunting. The reasons outstanding are:

a. The game is there in abundance. I believe there are more moose and a bigger average of even, heavy heads than New Brunswick can produce.

b. The open season affords the proper hunting-period, when moose are rutting and the waters not frozen up. Ontario has moose in abundance in the north also, but the powers that be have seen fit to keep the season closed until late October, when calling is over and the waterways are liable to freeze-up. New Brunswick's season is being shortened, I understand; but N. B. has been hunted for many years, and her game supply is restricted and areas are limited, which warrant more stringent laws.

c. Here are a few actual factors that lead one to hold to favoring northwestern Quebec. The writer has taken in 1917, 1918 and 1921, a series of movies of moose on these areas in Summer-time. He has seen as high as 47 moose in two days within ten miles of a stretch of waters. In two hours he has seen as high as 18 moose. In 1921 29 sportsmen hunting here bagged 23 moose and six bear, which is a very high percentage. More bulls are seen, and a bigger run of massive "basket" heads than any other area has produced within the past four years anyway. The territory is immense, and the breeding-ground as a consequence is far bigger than the eastern, older-hunted areas.

The writer has an organization in the Abitibi region, northwestern Quebec, covering 1,100 square miles; and a return for five years as checked against any similar region east or west shows that the game percentage of heads bagged is away beyond anything produced in either New Brunswick or Ontario.

All in all, I believe northwestern Quebec is the surest moose-hunting region outdoors in Canada today, leaving aside northern B. C. and Alaska.

The season opens September 10th on moose and August 20th on bear. License for non-residents costs $25. Duck and grouse, considerable black bear and quite a few deer add to the possibilities.

E. T. D. Chambers, Dept. of Colonization, Mines and Fisheries, Quebec City, P. Q., can give you game laws and additional data on the Abitibi region.

Rope-Spinning

HERE'S some advice from a former cowboy:

Question:—"Having a very slight knowledge of the art of rope-spinning, would like to ask you the following questions:

1. Can a six-plait rawhide rope be made as soft and pliable as sash-cord? If so, how? Also treatment of sash-cord?

2. Which is best rawhide rope, cotton or linen sash-cord?

3. What is proper length and diameter for ordinary spinning?

4. Do you use a brass or rawhide hondo, or do you tape the eye or use as it is?

5. Is there any way to prevent rope from kinking, and how do you splice eye in braided sash-cord?"———— ———, Cleveland, Ohio.

"P. S.—Please do not publish name if questions are shown in magazine."

Answer, by Mr. Connor:—1. Never having had a six-plait rope of the rawhide make to use, I can not say, but from my observation of them in other hands I am inclined to say it can not be done without rot entering into the deal.

2. This question is beyond me unless you mean which is the best rope for spinning purposes. In that case I will say that I think the Sampson sash-cord is the best.

3. That all depends upon what size loop you would use for the various tricks with the rope. For ordinary work such as jumping through the spinned rope, a circle of about 7 feet diameter, with about 3 to 4 feet for hand-hold.

4. The most serviceable hondo I have found is: Take a regular-sized hondo and plait it into the standing part of your rope, then use 1-16-inch copper wire and wrap it around the rope. Start it by inserting the wire through the rope and then wrap, and when you have covered enough of the hondo insert it through the rope on the other side of your hondo and secure it to the cord-wrapped joint of the rope and the hondo. It makes a light, serviceable hondo that will not knock your head off in case it hits you in spinning, and gives to the rope an even balance that can not be secured with aluminum hondos.

5. Splicing an eye in sash-cord can be done—I've seen it—but to give you the detail of the splicing on paper or even do it I could not. To prevent a rope from kinking, allow it to turn in your hand, or use reverse loop such as is known as the "butterfly" which when operated at frequent intervals reverses the inclination to kink.

Neither you nor any one can learn rope-spinning without long, hard practise and constant study of the rope—its feel, heft, speed of turning, etc. The best thing is to get one and start in on hours and hours of practise, and when you think you have learned all of it, try to see Chester Byers, Sammy Garrett, Gene McKay, or old Oro Paezzo (formerly with Buffalo Bill) and then you will find that there are many, many tricks in rope-spinning.

It was only last week that I had a new one slipped to me on the art. I had seen men spin rope with their teeth, and had seen them spin a rope in each hand and one in their teeth, and had heard of one fellow who had done all these and added another to his hip, but last week I saw a fellow who did successfully spin five ropes—one in each hand, one in his teeth, and one on each hip. Going some, I'll say.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

Cruising the Indian Ocean

A HANDFUL of tips on clothes, food, guns and languages:

Question:—"Another fellow and myself intend taking a trip in a two-masted schooner through the islands of the Indian Ocean and would appreicate anything you can tell us about the country.

What can we do down there to earn money, and just about what would it cost us for equipment to get started, boat and all?

What kind of guns would you advise us to carry, and what different languages are spoken there?"—R. E. Walker, Navy Yard, Norfolk, Va.

Answer, by Capt. Dingle:—Part of your question I can not answer, because, being out of the United States for some time, I am not in touch with present costs of vessels such as you want. I could only guess, and you'll get much better satisfaction by inquiring around Eastern seaports for a small schooner.

As for equipment, you need about the same clothes as you would take on a trip down the coast to Key West, say, and almost any old togs will do for working ship. Food you can reckon about $30 a month per man and be safe, I think.

Guns—well, what are you used to? I've found I'm suited best with a .250—.3000 Savage high-power rifle for game such as sheep, goat, deer, etc.; one of the same firm's new 12-gage repeating shotguns ought to do all you want in bird and small-game shooting for the pot; and, as for a pocket arm, take the pistol you have. If you haven't got one, get whatever your fancy dictates. I use a .380 automatic myself, and have never found anything or anybody who wanted two kicks with it. .45's look better in movies or Western fiction, but a .45 is a heavy pocket piece.

Languages differ almost in every island; French will carry you more or less in the Madagascar ports, the island of Reunion, and a few others; English will do rather more often even; as for the rest, you'll find Arabic, Malay, a mixture of both with Chinese, and Dutch; but if you have a bit of French and a bit of pidgin, you'll find English will serve you all right.

Personally I think you'd find more of interest in the Caribbean. There's a whole lot of barren water in the Indian Ocean.

Old Songs That Men Have Sung

Herewith an old-timer for which several of our readers have been asking: "On the Lakes of Pontchartrain." Old as it is, it was a "new one" on me. My hearty thanks to Comrades Frank Earnest of Sugar Loaf, Colorado, and John J. Kenney of Somerville, Mass., both of whom dug it up and sent it in. The author is unknown.

The Lakes of Pontchartrain

'Twas on the fourth of April I bid N' Orleans adieu
And took my way to Jackson where I was forced to go.
The money in my pocket no credit to me gained
As I walked that day from morn till night
On the Lakes of Pontchartrain.

By railroad ties and crossings I took my dreary way,
Through swamps of alligators my weary feet did stray,
All through the shades of evening some higher ground to gain
Until I met my creole girl
On the Lakes of Pontchartrain.

"Good eve, good eve, fair maiden, my money seems no good.
Were it not for the alligators I'd camp out in the wood."
"Oh, welcome, welcome, stranger, although our cot is plain,
We never turn a stranger out
On the Lakes of Pontchartrain."

She took me to her mother's cot and treated me quite well;
Her yellow hair in ringlets across her shoulders fell.
I tried to paint her beauty; alas! it was in vain,
So handsome was my creole girl
On the Lakes of Pontchartrain.

So I asked her then to marry me; she said: "That ne'er can be.
I have, kind sir, a sailor lad and he is miles at sea.
To him, my sailor sweetheart, I true shall e'er remain,
Till he comes to claim his creole girl
On the Lakes of Pontchartrain."

Now fare you well, sweet maiden, I ne'er shall see you more,
But I'll ne'er forget your kindness nor your cottage by the shore.
And when in social circles the flowing bowl I'll drain,
I'll drink the health of my creole girl
On the Lakes of Pontchartrain.

Comrade William A. Stewart, of New York, wants to know if any fellow Adventurer ever heard of "The *Cumberland's* Crew"—a sea ditty; also an Irish "come-all-ye" which starts off with the words, "Three years ago this very day I left the Cove o' Cork." "The *Cumberland's* Crew" is well known, and will soon be published herein.—Robert Frothingham, 745 Riverside Drive, New York.

LOST TRAILS

Note—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

LIVINGSTONE, SAM. L. Last heard of in San Diego, Calif., in 1920. Any information will be appreciated.—Address Leo. F. Olsen, 103 Grand View Rd., Ardmore, Pa.

HARTY, WILLIAM. From Lisheen, Palace Green, Ireland, over thirty years ago. Married. Not sure as to which state he resides in. Any one knowing his address please communicate with.—Address "*News Office*" Box 12, Te Aroka, Auckland, New Zealand.

KENNY, D. W. Last seen in Chicago 1901-1902. Stopped at Hannah and Hoggs Hotel, Clark St., opposite Post Office. Was getting up patents at that time. Kindly write to me.—Address C. J. Donnelly, 719½ Crocker St., Los Angeles, Calif.

PARKER, "WILLIE" LARATER. Last seen in Norfolk, Va., Jan., 1922. Aged twenty-five, medium height, weight 150 lbs. Round pleasant face, paratoed. Initials S. K. tattooed on right forearm. Heart with arrow through it on left. Wears two small diamond rings. Any information will be appreciated by her husband.—Address Wm. L. Parker, care of *Adventure.*

STAPLER, CAPT. JOHN R. Please write to me. Unable to locate you through Neptune and M. M. & R., associations.—Address B. M. Salmon, Box 65, Stamps, Ark.

BUNCH, WILLIAM S. Last heard of in Louisville, Kentucky. Blue eyes, light hair, about five feet ten inches. Forty-five years of age. He has lived in Mobile, Alabama, Shreveport, La., Houston, Texas, Augusta, Ga., and Columbia, S. C. In 1918 he lived in Penns Grove, New Jersey. He was a painter by trade. Any information will be appreciated by his mother.—Address Mrs. Margaret Bunch, care Hotel Orangeburg, Orangeburg, S. C.

STORKS, FRANCES HAVENS. Last heard of in Hancock, N. Y. Has one daughter, May. Any information will be appreciated.—Address Mrs. Alice White, 316 First St., Olyphant, Pa.

HARPER, CHAS. E. Last heard of in San Diego, California in 1920. Any information will be appreciated.—Address Leo. F. Olsen, Grand View Rd., Ardmore, Pa.

PERRY, ERNEST LESLIE. Mother will die if she doesn't hear from you. Please write. Last heard from with Moss Bros., shows. Was at Cairo, Ill., a few years ago. Sometimes known as E. Leslie. Any one knowing of his whereabouts please notify.—Address A. G. P. care of *Adventure*.

TISDALE, CLARK. If you see this write your old pal. I want to locate you.—Address HANSEL MCALLISTER, 1923 Division, Greenville, Texas.

DESCENDANTS of DESIRE BOURGEOIS. Born in the village Les Petites Chiettes, now Village Des Bon Lieu, Franche-Comte, Jura, France. Who emigrated to California U. S. A. in 1848. Please communicate with.—Address CHARLES BOURGEOIS, Hotel Casa Granda, Santiago de Cuba, Cuba.

RITEY, RICHARD P. Remember "Jack" and the bunch after the scrap at Kenny's. Drop me a line.—Address JACK, care of *Adventure*.

JOHN. No trouble contemplated. Write your mother.—Address C. W. C.

HOUGH, T. J. (Tom) Formerly of San Diego, Calif. 1912-1915. In oil fields now. Would be glad to hear from you.—Address JOSEPH C. FINCH, Box 1612, El Dorado, Ark.

PATTERSON, TOM. Formerly of San Diego, Calif., 1912-1915. In oil fields now. Would be glad to hear from you.—Address JOSEPH C. FINCH, Box 1612, El Dorado, Ark.

JAKUBOVSKY, JOSEPH and VIDIKOVSKY, KASIMIR. Both emigrants from Kovno, Poland. Former brother-in-law. Age about thirty-two, arrived U. S. about 1905. Both lived on Livingstone St., Philadelphia, Pa., and last heard of about 1912. Any information will be appreciated.—Address L. M. HAND, care of *Adventure*.

KELLY, FRANCIS A. Formerly officer of 20th Machine Gun Batt., 7th Division. Is reported to be in South America. Any information will be appreciated.—Address ROBT. L. BYRNES, P. O Box 691, Mexia, Texas.

WOULD like to hear from COL. MUERLING of the 2nd C. M. M. G. Bde., regarding some photos taken in France. Also would like to hear from "Hump" Parks, Auty, Sergt. "Mulligan" and other D. R's. Please write.—Address H. E. C. care of *Adventure*.

THE following have been inquired for in either the June 20th or June 30th issues of Adventure. They can get the name of the inquirer from this magazine:

BARTON, JAS. E.; Cabaniss, Harvey; Carter, J. P.; Childers, Theodore R.; Cline, Charles; Day, George E.; Ehrlich, Oscar; Fleming, Cyrus; Flye, Vernon F.; Fontain, Jack; Fraser, Alexander; Fromme, Harry K.; Gallagher, Chas. J.; Gardner, H. Belden; Gelston, Rodney S.; Graves, Dr. George C.; Hammers, Dr. Frank; Hasson, Earl Stewart; Hood, Herbert James; Jacks, Milton; Jolley, Major Wade; Lockwood, Robt. L.; McCloud, John Henry; McDevitt, Andrew John; McKeefery, Frank J.; Miller, Julius; Mickle, Frank (Big Mike); Munro, James; O'Neill, Jack; Palen, Charles, E.; Pharis, Alfred; Prusak, Johnnie; Ridenour, O.; Rippley, L. Eroll; Rolingthis, Anthony, P.; Rood, Carl S.; Shirley, Wissiam S.; Spence, Edmond Shackleford; Siebert, Jack; Stewart, C. J.; Traynor, W. J. H.; Valdez, Alex.

MISCELLANEOUS—Woods, Mrs. and Mr. Wm. daughter Frances May and one son Lee.

MANUSCRIPTS UNCLAIMED

ATKINS, E. E. S. JR.; Bayless, Dorothy; Banks, Jimmie, Miss.; Breath, Hastlar, Gal.; Bennett, Thomas T.; Brady, Patrick; Blum, N. A.; Buchanan, James; Beck, Waltrr H.; Crafts, H. A.; Chrisholm, Bryon; Cardie, Sinn; Caney, Jack; Cuttriss, C. A.; Cortelli, Fatima; Crafts, L. S.; Currite, Mildred; Fdwards, Henry A.; Emerson, F. S.; Gormley, W.; Gilfillan, Ruth; Gaylord, Alfred; Gould, S. D.; Gene, Frenchie; Happy, H; Hungerford, G. E.; Hilles, Lieut, Wm. U. S. M. C.; Huntington, C. H.; Holston, S. C.; Hurst, Freda; Kind, J. D.; Kelly, D.; Kimsey, R. W.; King, Homer B.; Lynch, W.; Livingston, J. K.; La Galire Peter; Marilee, Nelson; Matter, James K.; Miths, B. Radke; Moran, Edward J.; Mosse, James; MacIllrath, W. R.; Murphy, Elsbeth; Madison, Artell; McCravey, E. L.; Noble, George; O'Farrel, Patrick; Ober, Bertha; Pierce, Samuel S.; Perry, James; Paterson, Robert G.; Paradis, A. B.; Patten, Lewis E.; Polowe, David; Rhodes, Carrie L.; Roe, Charles; Robinson, Jack P.; Robertson, Mrs. Chester; Rice, Alex.; Stillons, George; Schmidt, Alex. R.; Sprague, T. R.; Smalley, Jack G.; Trekell, Mrs. Cynthia; Todd, Homer Eps.; Warner, J. E.; Weston, Edward; Wittell, Chester; Wilman, Cynthia; Webber, E. C.

PLEASE send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at address given do not reach you.—Address L. PATRICK GREENE, care of *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

JULY 20TH ISSUE

Besides the new serial and the two complete novelettes mentioned on the second page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

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WAR WAMPUM A Five-Part Story Conclusion The pursuit by *Pontiac's* fiends.	*Hugh Pendexter*
THE OLD HULL A fever ship, and the old captain comes into his own.	*Kenneth Howell*
THE CAMP ROBBER Two partners of the North on the trail without food.	*Ernest Bertelson*
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